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BRIGHT FUTURE FOR MARKET HALL

Report by Clare Butler

THE new bosses of a market have vowed to restore it to its former glory in 2018.

Promises have been made to bring in more stallholders, upgrade the building, stage seasonal events and create a community hub at Brierley Hill Market.

Plans are also in the pipeline to revamp the former upstairs part of the market hall with the aim of holding record fairs or fashion stalls.

Wayne Jones, from agents Jennings Homer and Lynch Ltd, said the market was going from strength to strength.

He explained: "There are plans in place to upgrade the market and we have reduced the rent on some of the stalls in there."

"We still have a handful of stalls left and expect about 10 or 15 new traders to join us by the end of spring to get us full."

"One of our ideas is to have a community meeting point in the market. It is in its early days at the minute but we would like a surgery where people could drop in and meet MPs or local police support officers."

"We want to make it a real hub for the community."

"There will be a focus on redecorating the hall too. We re-decorated a couple of traditional stalls and we want to add a new disabled toilet and baby-changing facilities."

Positive

He continued: "There is an upstairs, too, that used to be in use for 20/30 traders but it hasn't been in use for years. We would like to look at other ways of getting that back in use and we are talking to the new owners about that."

"It would be great to be able to stage record fairs or fashion stalls there."

"When it was for sale there were lots of rumours circulating and we wanted to stress that it would not be closing down."

"It is going from strength to strength with more positive things on the way."

Events for Valentine's Day, Easter and children's activities will also take place this year.

The market, on High Street, first opened in the 1920s.

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COURT

Four charged over girl's car fall death

FOUR people have been charged in connection with the death of a 20-year-old Stourbridge woman who fell from a car bonnet in Dudley.

Ellie Underhill died a week after suffering head injuries on the car park of Tesco Extra, off Birmingham Road, in Dudley, on Boxing Day 2016.

Luke Hickman, aged 19, of Wassell Road, Wollescote, has been charged with manslaughter and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.



Ross Bingham, 20, of Hagley Road, Edgbaston; Elly Phillips, 19, of Seymour Road, Wollescote; and Hana Edwards, 18, of Grove Road, Wollescote, are accused of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

The four who have been charged were due to appear before Walsall Magistrates Court yesterday (Wednesday).

ACCIDENT

Ford Fiesta flips over in ring road crash

FOUR people in their 20s had a lucky escape when their car careered into a lamp-post and ended up on its roof on Stourbridge Ring Road.

The Ford Fiesta driver lost control shortly before midnight on Saturday.

Fire crews from Stourbridge and Brierley Hill stations were called to the scene but the occupants had managed to get out of the vehicle. Fortunately none of them were badly hurt but a 22-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of drink driving.

West Midlands Police spokeswoman Caroline Schubert confirmed: "There were no serious injuries."

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CELEBRATING HERO DUNCAN



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Star quits UKIP job over leader's actions



Star Anderton – resigns by text

A DUDLEY councillor has quit her role as a UKIP national spokeswoman after it emerged party leader Henry Bolton had left his wife for another woman.

Star Anderton, a UKIP member who is also a councillor for Coseley East ward, has resigned her position as the party's disability spokeswoman following reports that Mr Bolton had been involved in an affair.

She let the party leader know by text message that she would be resigning and the reasons behind her decision.

Her exit follows reports that Mr Bolton had let his wife know on Decem-

ber 30 that he had left her for another woman by text message.

Councillor Anderton said: "I'm sticking by my decision to step down, I can't in my conscience follow him and say it is all okay."

"I'm not standing for council this year, I'll just be a simple member of UKIP."

"I have contacted the leader by text to tell him that I was resigning and why."

"He came in as leader in September and he portrayed himself as this wonderful loving man, wonderful family life, the hand of stability."

"It is all over social media and so is she – it just makes a laughing stock," Ms Anderton added.

"The way he has humiliated his wife I think is horrible."

"I just can't campaign for somebody who can seemingly treat somebody so harshly."

When asked about the future of the party, she added: "I think there is going to be a lot of soul searching."

Mr Bolton, 54, said there had been a 'change in my relationship status' but denied that it amounted to a 'clandestine affair'.

Family pay tribute to young stabbing victim

Mystery as car found burning in field



Firefighters tackle the blaze in a field near Oak Lane, Kingswinford

Photo: Brierley Hill Fire Service

FIREFIGHTERS were called as flames engulfed a car in a field, later tweeting this spectacular picture of the battle to put the fire out.

The white car was found in flames near Oak Lane in Kingswinford on Friday night.

Plumes of smoke could be seen billowing from its open windows

as crews battled to extinguish the flames before they could spread any further.

West Midlands Fire Service received a call from a member of the public at 7.20pm and sent a crew from Brierley Hill.

Police were called to the scene at 7.40pm.

Firefighters spent an hour working at the scene.

An investigation is under way into the cause of the blaze.

Anyone with information is urged to call police on 101. Witnesses can also contact the charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

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Court hears girl, 17, was strangled in hostel room

A COURT heard that a murder suspect strangled a 17-year-old girl he took back to his hostel room - sealing her body in a wardrobe with cling-film, a jury was told.

Ashley Foster struck within hours of meeting Megan Bills, three days after he had been freed from jail, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard. He denies murder.

The 24-year-old moved into a hostel for former inmates in Highgate Road, Brierley Hill on April 13 and was captured on CCTV taking the teenager into his room on April 16, Easter Sunday, it was said.

Foster left to stay with his sister some time later but Megan, from the Stourbridge area, was never seen alive again because she had been murdered by him, alleged Mr Crispin Aylett QC, prosecuting. He continued: "He must, then, have left her body inside his room. Certainly none of the CCTV at the hostel was ever to pick Megan up leaving the room and there is no other reliable evidence of her being seen alive again."

The court was told on Monday that in notes allegedly written by Foster to his relatives he told how the former Ridgewood High School pupil's death had happened as a result of a sex game gone wrong. The defendant did not return to the hostel for almost 24 hours.

Two and a half weeks later, on May 3, hostel staff complained of a bad smell during a routine inspection of the room which he blamed on the carpet, continued the prosecutor. The following day staff returned when he was not in and discovered the wardrobe had its doors tied together with cloth and was covered in cling-film. Mr Aylett added: "When the cling film removed they found a badly decomposed body." Megan was identified from dental records.

● The case continues

Campaign group win bronze award

A GROUP that campaigned successfully to save a Black Country pub from closure has won an award from the Campaign for Real Ale.

The Friends of Haden Cross Inn took the bronze in the Camra Pub Saving Award 2017 out of 12 groups nominated across the country.

The Dudley and South Staffordshire branch of Camra were this week visiting to pub in Halesowen Road, Old Hill, to make a presentation to the team.

When plans were revealed to build a supermarket on the pub's car park, The Friends of Haden Cross Inn secured Asset of Community Value status for the pub. It recently got new tenants.

The gold award went to the campaigners who saved the 200-year-old The Harrow in Stockbury, Kent, from closure.

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Council get £1.2k-a-day from car parking fines

MOTORISTS are coughing up more than £1,200 a day in parking fines to Dudley Council.

New figures have revealed Dudley Council received £1.3m in fine payments over the past three years. This has risen from £332,161 in 2014/15 to £473,595 in 2015/16 and £535,790 in 2016/17. That is from 11,188 parking charge notices and fixed penalty notices in 2014/15, 15,159 in 2015/16 and 17,389 in 2016/17.

They also reveal the top 15 lucrative streets and car parks for parking fines over the three years. Wolverhampton Street in Dudley came top with 820 tickets, bringing in £25,814 over the period. High Street and Stone Street, both in Dudley, came second and third with 561 and 534 tickets handed out. Fourth was Stourbridge High Street which saw 525 tickets given out.

Councillor Karen Shakespeare, cabinet member for environmental services, said: "Parking restrictions are there for a reason – to keep our roads safe and traffic moving. The majority of motorists abide by the rules but unfortunately some people do not and receive a fixed penalty notice. All money generated goes back into helping fund council services."

Nearly 4,000 parking fines were handed out in just three months in Dudley borough last summer. More than £82,000 was made from penalty notices between July and September.

Crossing safety for pensioners

COUNCILLORS and residents are celebrating following a successful campaign to improve road safety near a pensioners' club in Upper Gornal.

Ward leaders have worked alongside the Upper Gornal Pensioners Club to secure funding for a new pedestrian crossing on Kent Street.

The plans include a new pedestrian refuge outside the Pensioners Club along with road markings and tactile paving.

There will also be a beacon installed on the refuge to warn drivers that it is a crossing point.

Councillor Keiran Casey said: "This is another great example of local councillors and residents working together to improve things locally."

Old wall repaired

A 200-year-old wall that was knocked down following a two-car crash in Sedgley has been repaired. The wall on the bend of Gospel End Street was damaged at the end of August.

Two men banned from town centre pubs



Daniel Davies (left) and Kyle Williams

TWO men suspected of having links to drug dealing in Dudley have been banned from pubs and bars in the town.

Kyle Williams, from Yardley, and Daniel Davies, from Dudley, have also been stopped from associating with each other.

West Midlands Police got civil injunctions barring the pair from all licensed premises for the next seven years. They are also unable to enter anywhere that sells alcohol in an area including Dudley town centre and Merry Hill shopping centre.

Detective Constable Dan Wickenden, from Force CID, said: "We applied for the injunction following a series of violent incidents related to drug dealing. We believe Williams and Davies are linked to these events but do not have enough evidence for a criminal prosecution."

"The injunction is the next best thing as it allows us to manage their activity and arrest them should they fail to comply. Both refused to engage with intervention programmes or schemes aimed at diverting people from crime."

"The injunctions last for seven years, until July 2024, and if either are caught breaching any of the conditions they risk being jailed."

"Local officers know who these men are, recognise them on sight, and we will be looking to see if they breach any of the conditions. But our communities also play a vital role as our eyes and ears on the ground."

Other conditions of the injunction say the pair can only have one mobile phone each and must notify police about any vehicle they are travelling in.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Council leader will be in the hot seat

PEOPLE will get the chance to fire questions at the leader of Dudley Council when he takes the hot seat for an hour-long live video broadcast.

Councillor Patrick Harley will be taking questions via Dudley borough's Facebook and promises he will not shy away from contentious issues such as the proposed travellers' site locations.

It is on Wednesday, January 17, from 6pm to 7pm when people will ask questions in the forum. Councillor Harley said: "These are exciting times with the Midland Metro extension and plans for the site of Cavenagh House and I want to hear what people think."

Mayor's winter walking appeal

THE Mayor of Dudley is inviting people to take part in his charity Winter Walk, which starts and finishes at the Bonded Warehouse in Stourbridge, on January 28.

It will start at 10am and see walkers take in a seven mile round trip at their own pace to the Prestwood area along the canal. It's open to all ages and walkers can bring along their dog.

Councillor Dave Tyler, who is leading the event, said: "All profits will be donated to the his charities. Visit www.mayorofdudley.org.uk/events-1/mayors-winter-walk/form to sign up."

Sing up for chance to join the choir

BUDGING singers are invited to attend a popular Black Country choir's open evening.

Viva Musica is holding the event on January 23 at 7.30pm at Ham Dingle Primary School, Pedmore, Stourbridge.

The choir was formed in 1989 and performs a wide range of music throughout the year. The membership of the choir includes many singers from church choir or amateur theatre backgrounds. Viva Musica presents several major concerts a year plus a traditional Christmas carol concert.

College students will dance at Hippodrome

FOUR dancers from Halesowen College will be dancing in productions at Birmingham Hippodrome this year.

Ellie Baker, Megan Alebon, Abbie Sanders and Alarna Parkes will be working with different production teams during the year at one the country's top theatres.

The four students had to pass intense auditions which saw them vie with students from other colleges in the Midlands.

Wolves dream comes true for tragic Neil

A TERMINALLY ill father had his final wishes come true as a Wolves star delivered a special message and Disneyland was brought to him to surprise his daughter.

Portuguese star Diogo Jota was a surprise addition to an emotional day as Neil Mattocks ticked three items off his bucket list.

The 43-year-old father-of-two, from Cradley, has been given weeks to live after being diagnosed with a rare form of cancer.

Staff at Mary Stevens Hospice in Stourbridge, where he is being cared for, were able to arrange a personal message from Jota, to the delight of Neil and son Ryan, 16, who are both big Wolves fans.

There was also a special treat for Neil's step-daughter Paige who received a visit from two Disney princesses.

It had been Neil's dream to take his daughter, who is 17, to Disneyland so the hospice helped bring Disneyland to them in the form of two performers, who took on the form of Rapunzel and Frozen's Elsa.

Then, Neil and wife Gaye renewed their wedding vows in a touching ceremony in front of family and friends.

Diagnosed

Neil was diagnosed with cancer in January last year but was told in December that nothing more could be done with him. He was transferred to the hospice where he is spending his final days.

It has been a desperate time for Gaye, 44, who married Neil in 2016, but she said the surprises meant the family could be happy together one more time.

She said: "We always planned to take Paige to Disneyland before Neil became ill and this was the next best thing. She didn't know a thing about it. She thoroughly enjoyed herself, her face told a million stories."

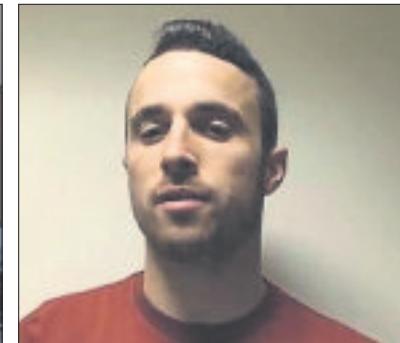
In the video message, the Wolves star said: "Hi Neil, it's Diogo here, you're friends have told me how brave you are being and how proud they are of you so I just wanted to send you a message to say hello and thank you for your support. Keep fighting and give my love to your family."



Neil Mattocks at the Mary Stevens Hospice with his family and the Disney princesses



Surprised Paige meets the Disney princesses



Wolves star Diogo Jota delivers his message to Neil

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Parking at Himley looks set to rise

THE cost of season tickets at Himley Park could increase under new proposals.

Dudley Council says raising the price of parking passes for the grounds will allow reinvestment in leisure facilities across the borough.

Under the plans, the 2018 fee for a season ticket bought up to April 14 is £5.

The authority, says the rise is in line with inflation. A decision will be made on January 18.

Councillor Hilary Bills said price increases were due to a lack of funding from central government.

Splashing the cash on treats

PEOPLE in the West Midlands would be willing to fork out £107 for an extra week's holiday allowance at work, a survey reveals.

They would also spend £103 for a month of nice weather and £82 for someone to deep clean their home. A personal shopper to buy all their Christmas presents was also high on the list, with people willing to pay £71 to offload the task.

Those interviewed would part with £68 for someone to sort out and manage their bills and the survey, by loan provider Wonga, also revealed people would splash out £49 for an extra hour in bed.

£100 is waiting for the best room

A STAFFORDSHIRE-based home furnishing business is running a competition to find the UK's best spare room. Terry's Fabrics is encouraging people from the Black Country and Staffordshire to get involved with the competition.

The winner will receive £100 worth of Terry's Fabrics products. A team of judges will choose the winner based on originality and uniqueness. To enter, share a photo of a spare room at www.terrysfabrics.co.uk with a caption.

Open day for would-be university students

THE University of Wolverhampton is holding an open day on February 17.

Visitors can look around, meet lecturers and see the student accommodation and talk to experts on issues such as money, study and careers during the event at the university's campuses. For further details, contact the enquiries team on 0800 953 3222 or email enquiries@wlv.ac.uk

Sir Bobby's tribute to the 'greatest footballer'

FOOTBALL legend Sir Bobby Charlton has added his support to a programme of events celebrating the life of Duncan Edwards.

The England and Manchester United star paid an emotional tribute to the 'greatest footballer' he had ever seen. It will be 60 years in February since Dudley-born Edwards died at the age of 21 from injuries suffered in the Munich air crash, which claimed

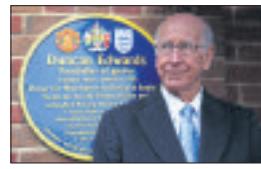
the lives of 23 people, including eight members of United's famous Busby Babes team.

A commemorative exhibition has opened at the Dudley Archives and Local History Centre, Tipton Road, this week (see below).

Duncan's closest friend and fellow United and England colleague, Sir Bobby, survived the crash but has never forgotten those who perished

at Munich Airport in February 1958. In paying tribute to his pal, Sir Bobby said: "Almost 60 years have passed since I last saw Duncan when I left hospital in Munich and I still think of him almost every day."

"I am very pleased to be part of this tribute in Dudley that will pay homage to the memory of my friend, teammate and the greatest footballer I have ever seen."



Sir Bobby with Duncan's plaque

£25,000 BID to provide a boost for businesses

PLANS have been unveiled to form a new community-led business group in Stourbridge.

Traders want to establish a Business Improvement District (BID), following one set up Halesowen – the first of its kind in the Dudley borough.

Stourbridge and District Chamber of Trade is requesting £5,000 from Stourbridge community forum to help set up the initiative.

A BID is a defined area where businesses are charged a levy, which goes into a fund that can be spent on community projects.

SDCT says it will need £25,000 to apply. The group has previously been awarded £5,000 from Stourbridge Community Forum and another £5,000 from the Empty Shops and High Street Innovation Fund to form a business case.

Community forum bosses were deciding yesterday (Wednesday) whether to award further funding.

A report by the Stourbridge Community Forum said: "A Business Improvement District is a defined area within which businesses are required to pay an additional tax in order to fund projects within the district's boundaries."

Representatives of the Chamber have clarified that all money allocated previously, as well as the current application, will be needed to complete the final phase of the process, which requires a ballot of local businesses to take place.

The Chamber has already appointed a consultant to support the process."

Black Country boy who became a Red Devil hero

Report by Heather Large

FROM Black Country boy to Red Devil – a new exhibition celebrating the life and footballing career of Duncan Edwards has opened in Dudley.

Photographs, press cuttings, memorabilia and football programmes relating to the Dudley-born Busby Babe are going on display at Dudley Archives and Local History Centre.

The exhibition, which opened yesterday (Wednesday), tells Duncan's story from his Priory Park roots to championship titles with Manchester United and appearances for England.

It is part of a wider tribute programme organised to mark the 60th anniversary of Edwards' death at the age of 21 from injuries sustained in the Munich Air Crash.

Duncan, who grew up on Priory Estate, played 180 games for Manchester United, England and The Army. He helped Manchester United to win two consecutive First Division Championships.

Complete

At Old Trafford, under the guidance of manager Matt Busby, he became part of the famous 'Busby Babes' side of the 1950s.

Items in the exhibition include programmes from games Duncan played in for The Army side at Arsenal and Manchester City in the 1956/57 season, as well as photographs from his playing days for United and with his England caps.

Duncan's best pal, Sir Bobby Charlton (see above) shared the same digs in Manchester and during National Service near Shrewsbury they travelled together on the train every Friday night for Saturday matches before returning to the Army on Monday.

Sir Bobby added: "Duncan was the complete footballer – a colossus, powerful with his heading ability and unbreakable in the tackle. He would rampage tirelessly across the pitch, had a perfect first touch and was deadly in front of goal."

Admission to the exhibition, which runs until March 30, is free and all items will remain at the centre after it ends.



Tribute organiser Jim Cadman and senior archivist Richard Lewis at the Dudley Archives and Local History Centre



Duncan Edwards grew up on the Priory Estate



Duncan in action for England – Sir Bobby calls him 'a colossus'

Exhibit includes canalside views

A RANGE of canalside views will form part of a new art exhibition that has gone on display this month.

Nine Locks Art Group, based in Brierley Hill, has also created winter landscapes and studies of nature using a variety of styles and media.

The exhibition at Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust's Portal building, Birmingham New Road, Dudley, is free and will run until January 22. All the original artwork featured in the exhibition is for sale. Holly Wain, heritage activities assistant at Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, said: "We're so excited to have Nine Locks Art Group back at The Portal's gallery space."

The group meet on Mondays at Brierley Hill Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Hill Street.

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MP will not intervene over Brexit stamps issue

A CAMPAIGN for a set of special Brexit stamps to mark the UK's exit from the European Union is not being backed by a Black Country MP with responsibility for the Post Office.

Leading Brexiteers including Boris Johnson have urged the Royal Mail to release the commemorative stamps next year to mark the UK's departure from the EU.

But Conservative MP Margot James, who has responsibility for the Post Office as part of her brief as the Small Business Minister, has refused to put pressure on the postal service, which is independent of Government.

Royal Mail bosses insist there will be no commemorative release when Britain leaves the EU on March 29 next year, as there was to mark entry into the European Economic Community in 1973. Ms James said: "I don't think it was such a divisive issue then. They have no plans to produce them and I am not going to interfere one way or another."

A number of high profile Brexiteers have criticised the Royal Mail's decision. Foreign Secretary Mr Johnson said: "Leaving the European Union will be a monumental moment in British history, so let's deliver a commemorative stamp that shows the world we've got Brexit licked." Tory MP Andrew Bridgen said: "We definitely need Brexit stamps to celebrate this joyous and momentous occasion."

Chain to open its 32nd pub in spring

GROWING brewery and pub firm Black Country Ales (BCA) will open the 32nd pub in its chain in the spring.

The Pensnett-based brewery and pubs company acquired the freehold of The Cross at Finstall, near Bromsgrove, just before Christmas.

The acquisition capped off a busy year for BCA which opened real ale pubs in Stourbridge and The Jewellery Quarter, as well as transforming the former Barclays Bank in Bewdley into an ale house.

The Cross had been saved from redevelopment as housing following a campaign by the local community and the Campaign for Real Ale, who have managed to get the pub listed as an asset of community value.

Sticky craft fun

A CRAFT session is being held at a Black Country landmark. Sticky Saturday for families is at the Red House Glass Cone, Wordsley, next Saturday (January 20) 1.30pm to 3.30pm.

Visit www.dudleyzoo.org.uk website.



Platform at Stourbridge Junction

A CAMPAIGN group has urged new company and franchise owner West Midlands Railway to 'repaint and deep clean every one of its stations'.

The Stourbridge Line User Group (SLUG) says Stourbridge Line stations are in need of makeover.

The group adds it will put pressure on West Midlands Rail and West Midlands Railway to see the draft timetables as soon as possible to ensure select services are still included, such as Sunday trains at Hartlebury.

The group said it had established a good working relationship with the

new franchise holder, West Midland Trains, which operates under the brand name West Midlands Railway, as well as policy maker, West Midlands Rail.

SLUG chairman William Whiting said: "There have been dramatic developments such as West Midlands Railway and West Midlands Rail making a commitment to a passenger rail link from Stourbridge to Brierley Hill."

"Also, Chiltern Railways has introduced weekend services to and from London Marylebone."

"However, as a campaign group,

we must not be complacent when so much more is needed for the new generation of passengers."

"Stourbridge Line stations are badly in need of a makeover and we must push for West Midlands Railways' commitment to repaint and deep clean every one of its stations."

The West Midlands Trains franchise should run until March 2026.

Mr Whiting added: "We must put pressure on West Midlands Rail and West Midlands Railway to see the draft December 2018 timetable as soon as possible."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Firm's turnover now tops £100m

KINGSWINFORD-BASED industrial fans business Elta Group saw turnover go through the £100 million barrier during the last financial year.

Elta, which is based on the Pensnett Trading Estate, makes air movement, filtration, treatment and distribution products.

It's turnover rose from £91.5m in 2015-2016 to £109.8m in the year to the end of March 2017.

Pre-tax profits also rose from £2.3m to £3.6m.

The firm was helped by a net gain in foreign currency movements.

Elta Group was set up in 1995 and employs almost 800 people.

Stories of the archive treasures

TALKS looking at the history of items in a Black Country museum is taking place on Wednesday.

Treasures of the Museum is at Dudley Archives and Local History centre, on Tipton Road, Dudley. The event is free to enter and sessions will run from 10.30am, 11.30am and 12.30pm.

Pre-booking is essential and can be arranged by calling 01384 815571.

Two days later an adult craft session is due at the centre, particularly aimed at people who enjoy speaking. Entry cost £6. Organisers say pre-booking is essential.

Rowing club in need of helpers

VOLUNTEERS are needed to help in a variety of roles at a rowing club in Dudley.

Dudley Rowing Club, based at Lodge Farm Reservoir, Netherton, particularly needs help getting boats in and out of storage and onto the water.

It is also looking for people to train on its power boat for rescues and also to train as a cox. Help with organising social events is also needed.

Anyone interested in getting involved should see the club's Facebook page.

Society to host first history talk of the year

THE Black Country Society has announced details of its first lecture of 2018. The talk titled 'From Whizz Bang Alley to Wordsley Hospital' will take place on January 24 at 7.30pm at The Portal, the HQ of the Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, off Birmingham New Road.

Dr David Cox, lecturer and former editor of 'The Blackcountryman', will talk. Non-members are welcome to attend. Admission is £2.

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Interesting phrase, hardly used, and a little bit weird

Protest: It's lettuce leaves at the ready

THINGS aren't looking too good for Carlinis, a new Italian restaurant in Al-brighton, where the chef boasted on Facebook about "spiking" a vegan's meal.

Laura Goodman has now quit, after militant vegans reportedly threatened to target the restaurant. You can always spot militant vegan protesters. They only throw lettuce leaves and lentils.

□ □ □

THAT said, I now find myself eating more vegan-friendly food than ever before, after being told at one of those routine mid-life health checks that my cholesterol is too high. Not dramatically, but I do need to improve my diet. It seems cream crackers in the morning, bread-and-butter seasoned with a couple of pork scratchings for lunch, and microwaved meatballs and spuds at night won't really cut it any more.

In the past I would have shrugged this off, but a few deaths over the past few years – some close – have made me ponder how fleeting life can be. So I now consume an exorbitantly-priced health drink each day, as well as five portions of fruit and veg.

Now I've always been a five-a-day sceptic, mainly because I don't like glib soundbites trotted out by the sort of people who think there is a place in the English language for terms such as "stakeholders" and "outreach". And it's time consuming.

The initial plan was to buy an appropriate selection of fruit and veg, and stick it in the blender to make one disgusting drink which I could wolf down once a night and be done with. If only.

Unfortunately, liquefied food can only account for one of the five. So a glass of orange juice seems less bother.

Then there is the question of what constitutes a "portion". Government guidelines say 80g, but I suspect that means as little to you as it does to me.

An apple counts as one, which I can eat while I work, although peeling and slicing it the night before to avoid losing teeth is seriously tedious.

I hoped a large box of chopped swedes and carrots would be the answer, but you have to eat half the packet for it to count as one of the five. No wonder there's an obesity crisis.

So my nights now consist of gulping orange juice while the peas and carrots simmer in the pan. Then, after News at Ten, it's time for some fruit – usually strawberries (no sugar) or pineapples – washed down with a bottle of Benecol to make it taste nicer. Can't tell you how much I'm loving life at the moment.



Kim Jong-un and "I've got a bigger nuclear button than you" contest



Lord Adonis – wants to be free to campaign for a second EU referendum



Hattie Jacques – we get all wistful about some legendary golden nursing age

Bearing the brunt of this quirky word

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



QUIRKY phrases department. It was reported this week that coastal areas "bore the brunt" of Storm Eleanor. Interesting word, brunt. Nobody really knows where the word comes from and we hardly ever use it except when something or someone is bearing it. Brunt. The more you say it, the weirder it sounds.

ABOUT 1,400 cars were destroyed in the spectacular car-park fire in Liverpool. I wonder how many insurance different claims will be made.

THE wonder is that such fires are so rare. If you take the gloomy view, a multi-storey car park is basically a pile of petrol bombs parked closely to each other with its sides open to the wind and with ramps helpfully providing a route for an inferno to grow and spread. It sometimes occurs to me that if the internal-combustion engine were invented today, it would never get past the health-and-safety people. So, Mr Inventor, in order to refuel these so-called cars of yours, you will need 100,000-gallon petrol tanks buried in the centre of all our towns and cities, and you will park these cars in thousands of high-rise crematoria? Not a chance.

IT is hard to rejoice at the 70th anniversary of the NHS when we have spent the past seven decades moaning that it has never been as good as it used to be. We get all wistful about some legendary golden age, usually involving tightly-folded bedsheet, carbolic and Hattie Jacques. The big difference between 1948 and 2018 is the nature of patients and their illnesses. Seventy years ago the sick were, by and large, ill as a result of things done to them by the establishment. They were the wounded and shell-shocked of two world wars, the victims of

damp slums, dangerous factories, dusty coal mines and malnutrition. They were the hapless customers who believed the all-pervading propaganda that smoking was not only fashionable but good for you. Today, NHS waiting lists are stuffed with people who are bombarded with healthy-living advice but prefer to ignore it and are ill as a result of lifestyle choices. And while it may be wrong to ration or refuse NHS treatment to those who have screwed up their own health, you can't help thinking what the hungry, bronchitic, war-wounded patients of 1948 would make of the obese, hungover patients of today. They might well ask: "What are you doing in the queue?"

ONE of my New Year resolutions is to be kinder to the generation usually described as millennials, hipsters or snowflakes. But I'm putting it on hold for a while, having stumbled across a report on an assortment of twentysomethings moaning about how they cannot afford to get on the property ladder. One is described as "a part-time writer and illustrator" while another says she is a "marketing and lifestyle blogger". Listen, kids. These are not jobs. They are, at best, hobbies. This explains why the building society manager's eyes do not light up when he gets your mortgage-application form. Get a proper, full-time job, put in all the overtime you can, save a few grand and try again.

ONE of the enduring mysteries of the internet age is that people who are already online will

email or text about an issue without first making an elementary check on Google. For those who harangued me on the subject, there is nothing blasphemous, lazy or ungrammatical about the term Xmas.

OH, dear. Donald Trump has got into an "I've got a bigger nuclear button than you" contest with Kim Jong-un. Whatever next?

MEANWHILE, it is revealed that thousands of medical emergencies are being answered not by paramedics but by specially-trained firefighters. "Hello, is that 999? I've got this burning sensation."

ADONIS wants to be free to campaign for a second EU referendum. He thinks remaining in the EU is a good idea. Mind you, he also thinks HS2 is a good idea. His solution to Britain's transport problem is to pour thousands more commuters into London each day by driving a new railway 100 yards wide through some of the most beautiful English countryside, demolishing properties and farms and blighting thousands of homes. And to what end? To cut 20 minutes off the time from London to Brum. The Adonis cure for our housing shortage is equally brutal, to concrete over half of southern England, plonking a million new homes in a vast arc from Oxford to Cambridge. He is one of those people who is entirely driven by the notion of 'growth', who genuinely cannot understand that most of us would rather spend 20 minutes longer on the train than rip up a single ancient forest. The 'growth' brigade's only strategy is to lay more concrete, erect more buildings and allow Britain's population to grow to 80 or 100 million. There has to be a better way.

TALKING POINT



Companies are never really at our service

IT baffles me why these departments are called Customer Service as that seems to be the last thing they do. I called recently regarding a delivery I was expecting – to replace a damaged item. This was due to be picked up and a new one delivered.

I had called once to report the item as damaged. Twenty minutes later after trying to get to the appropriate department and listening to irritating music while the girl with the annoying voice said "Your call is important to us, we appreciate your patience etc, etc", I hung up.

Companies are always very careful to say your call is being recorded. Is that just in case you hurl abuse down the phone?

Anyway, when I had a bit more time I tried again. Eventually after going through the list of options, none of which suited my query – option 3 then option 5 and back to option 2, aagh! – I opted for the sales line, knowing that would be the one most likely to be answered. Five minutes later I actually spoke to a PERSON! She told me it wasn't really the correct department but she would put me through to the right one. I begged her "Please don't let me be holding on for so long" and she assured me I would be put straight through. I still had to wait five minutes!

Finally the annoying music – played so loud you have to hold the phone away from your ear – stopped and a woman answered. I gave her my order number, name, address, postcode etc and she tracked me down on the computer. She was very sorry and a replacement would be sent and the damaged one picked up.

The following week, I received a text saying one company would collect my damaged parcel but no mention of delivering the new one. Back on the phone – this was a drawer unit for the bedroom and, having removed the old one, I was fed up of piles of clothes all over the floor.

Again I was passed around only to be told the new one would be delivered by another company. Delivery day came and went but no replacement item, although the old one had gone from the car port.

Next morning at 8.05, minutes after the department opened, I rang to complain. I explained that nothing had arrived. They claimed they had tried to deliver it but no-one was in so they left a card. Rubbish! My son and two builders were there and no card was put through the door.

But don't worry, it would arrive and I would get something as a 'goodwill' gesture. Eventually it did turn up, dumped by the front door in full view of the street. Goodwill gesture? You guessed it – nothing – but then again I would have been happy to just sort out the problem at my first attempt. Customer service? You must be joking!

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Velodrome is needed in time for games

THE bid by the City of Birmingham to stage the 2022 Commonwealth Games within Birmingham has been successful, this will be a great boost for the development of sport, as well as business, within the West Midlands.

Youngsters from poor backgrounds who often do not get the chance to travel outside the area to either participate or watch sports events, will benefit by having some of the best athletes in many sports competing on their doorstep. Many people of all ages and backgrounds will be inspired to take up sport for either competition, leisure or fitness. New sports stadia (swimming pool) or improved existing stadia (Alexander Park) will leave a lasting legacy.

So this is how you get a gong

IT appears that a new qualification has been included on the crony list for political gongs.

1. You must be a total failure. Nick Clegg qualifies under this heading in that he managed to reduce Lib Dem seats at Westminster by 49 and lose his own seat.

2. You must take on a high office at Westminster, let's say Deputy PM, and for five years do nothing of any note. Once more Nick qualifies.

3. You must have the ability to lie through your back teeth. Excellent. Nick fulfills this e.g. 'We will scrap tuition fees'.

4. You must frustrate the democratic will of the largest number of voters ever recorded.

Got it in spades Nick. I might just give it a try folks. Sir Alan Etheridge has a certain ring to it.

ALAN M ETHERIDGE
Dudley

The West Midlands has produced many very fine track riders over the years including, four time world champion and Commonwealth Games gold medallist Hugh Porter, MBE; the late Tommy Godwin; the late Trevor Bull; Trevor Gadd; Jess Varnish and Helen Scott, MBE, to name but a few. Many of those riders would have trained and raced on the outdoor track, Salford Park, Birmingham, which was very sadly demolished in the 1990s without being replaced.

Many supporters of cycle sport within the West Midlands are understandably very concerned that, due to the lack of a modern 250m indoor velodrome within Birmingham, the track cycling may be held many miles from Birmingham.

The nearest (outdoor) banked cycle track, Manor Abbey, Halesowen, was built in 1948; whilst this track is great for developing grass roots cycling, the days of staging world class track racing have long gone.

The five indoor velodromes existing within the UK work. They produce champion riders and make a huge impact on participation levels within their region. I would urge all those with the power and influence to ensure a new indoor velodrome is built within Birmingham.

DAVID VINER
Halesowen A&CC Chair Cycling

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
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story, write to The Editor,
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Fed up of all the car park charge moaners

I am sick and tired of ranting about hospital car parking charges. Nowhere in this country now can you leave your car for free. Hospitals like City are in built-up areas and doing away with charges will not make parking at the hospital easier - locals will just use it as a dumping ground for their vehicles and people going to work in Birmingham will leave their cars and get a bus. People moan about paying a few quid to park but how about the thousands wasted every day by people who don't turn up for appointments.

HELENA CAMWELL
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Clive Vickers in the tasting room at Halfpenny Green Wine Estate

Lorry driver who hit man on crossing is spared jail

By John Scott

A LORRY driver, who struck a pedestrian on a crossing in Brierley Hill during four seconds of inattention, has been spared jail.

Disaster struck in broad daylight as Lloyd Southall – at the wheel of a vehicle carrying 17 tons of steel – was distracted by a car horn, a judge was told at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

This momentarily drew the driver's attention away from the road ahead and when he looked to the front again it was too late. The driver veered to his right but was unable to avoid 23-year-old Matthew Bloomer who was crossing the dual carriageway after traffic lights gave pedestrians right of way.

Mr Nigel Stelling, prosecuting, said the HGV was travelling along Pedmore Road, Brierley Hill, at less than 30mph in a 40mph zone and had slowed to 19mph at the point of impact.

Mr Bloomer, who was wearing ear phones and did not look towards oncoming traffic before stepping off the kerb, suffered devastating injuries. He had a bleed on the brain as well as multiple fractures to the skull, face and ribs, and a damaged lung. He was in an induced coma for three weeks.

Red

The crossing lights for traffic changed from green to amber as the lorry approached and had gone to red when the incident occurred on May 18.

A police expert, who checked the dash cam and tachograph from the lorry, concluded that the defendant's driving throughout the day in the run up to the accident had been 'exemplary,' said Miss Samantha Powis, defending the 40-year-old father-of-two from Dudley.

She said: "A lack of attention lasting four seconds had disastrous consequences. He can only attribute this to being distracted by the sound of the car horn and it is difficult to imagine a more contrite defendant."

Southall, of Brierley Hill Road, of previous good character, pleaded guilty to causing serious injury by dangerous driving. He lost his job after receiving an interim driving disqualification after the accident but has since found work as a labourer.

Judge Amjad Nawaz concluded: "There can be no achievement in sending somebody who has lived an unblemished life and had an unblemished driving record but for a few seconds of inattention into immediate custody."

Southall was given a ten month jail sentence suspended for two years with 100 hours unpaid work and £200 costs. He was banned from driving for two years.

Santa Run brings in £12,000 for hospice

AN annual Santa run in Stourbridge raised £12,000 for Mary Stevens Hospice. Hundreds donned their red suits and Santa hats to brave the heavy rain and cold to run through Mary Stevens Park in aid of the facility.

A hospice spokesman said: "It was muddy, it was messy and it was absolutely amazing, and we honestly cannot tell you how grateful we are to everyone who came and to everyone who made it possible."

Those taking part ran three laps of the park, a half-lap and sprint finish.

Stourbridge Fire Station, the Tenth Lock Pub, the Rotary Club of Kinver and Dudley-based Mommy's Mascots More were amongst those in the Manor Vets sponsored event.

Drop of cheer as winemakers plans for expansion schemes

By Heather Large

A FAMILY-RUN business and top tourist attraction is raising a glass to an exciting year ahead – with three expansion projects getting under way.

Work has already begun on the first scheme at Halfpenny Green Wine Estate, in Bobbington, which is an extension to the popular restaurant.

It will enable staff to seat a further 25 to 30 diners and Clive Vickers, who runs the site with

his father Martin and wife Lisa, said it had been designed to meet demand. He said: "We are finding more and more people are visiting the café, tasting our wines and having a bite to eat."

Following a surge in bookings for wine and gin tastings, an outdoor balcony with seating will be added to the wine shop. "We've got planning permission for a balcony

which will be glass-fronted and south-facing so people can sit overlooking the vineyard," added Clive.

"It will give customers an outdoor experience for wine and gin tastings."

A successful growing season led to a bumper crop and the need for more storage and production space so a new building to increase capacity will be constructed, in addition to the existing 10,000 sq ft winery, which was built in 2005.

Day nursery is rated 'good' in turnaround

A DAY nursery previously rated inadequate has taken action to ensure children are safe, Ofsted has ruled.

Happy Hours Day Nursery, in Lower Gornal, is now rated good in all areas following a return visit by inspectors. They said nursery bosses had worked hard to ensure changes were made quickly after concerns were flagged up in July.

Following that inspection, it was said children's welfare was 'significantly compromised'. At that time, during an inspection a child was left with a student who had not undergone DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks, which ensure people are safe to work with children.

But the watchdog said it was now confident children were in safe hands at the Longfellow Road nursery.

Deputy manager Jessica Bottley said: "We have put it all behind us and it has been a good turnaround."

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One 'L' of a driving test wait finally over



Retired support worker Tony Jones celebrates finally passing his driving test with his instructor Mark Evans

A CANCELLATION and a worried wait of four weeks saw him fail his first driving test in 1972.

But over 45 years later – and after more than 100 hours in lessons – Anthony Jones from Netherton has passed his driving test at the second attempt.

The 65-year-old retired support worker was ‘over the moon’ when he found out he had passed at the Lower

Gornal driving test centre. Mr Jones, 65, from Netherton, said: “I’m very pleased. This is my second test, the first one was in 1972 and I failed then.

Married

“Me and my wife then decided to get married and buy a house – money gets tight. It is something I have always wanted to do but something I have never been able to afford to do. We have had to manage with public transport but there’s more fun driving.

“I should have gone for it on Valentine’s day in 1972 and it was foggy. It got cancelled.

“I’m just really over the moon. If I had not have passed I would have gone in for it again. I had over 100 hours of two-hour lessons.”

“I have been waiting for it long enough and I have no intention of being a boy racer. My wife is very happy, she was more nervous than I was.” Mr Jones is now planning to buy his first car.

Married

“Me and my wife then decided to get

married and buy a house – money gets

tight. It is something I have always

wanted to do but something I have

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6.15pm Fitness Fusion - dance based fitness with body conditioning.
6.30pm Burlex
7.15pm Bootcamp - all abilities

TUESDAY
09.30 Pilates - starts 9th Jan
10.00 Tone Mix
5.45pm Clubbercise
6.30pm Zumba
6.40pm Hard HAU2
7.30pm Pilates / Yoga Mix

WEDNESDAY
09.30 Pound Fit
10.15 Funky HAU2
5.45pm Funky HAU2
6.30pm Sosa Dance Fitness
7.30pm Abs Box

THURSDAY
09.30 Circuits
10.00 Sosa Dance Fitness
6pm Fitsteps
6.45pm KPOPX
7.30pm Bootcamp

FRIDAY
09.30 Yoga
10.15 Mash Up - Instructors choice
2pm Mommy and me Bootcamp
5.45pm Pound Fit

SATURDAY
09.15 Metafit
10.00 Pound Fit

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09.45 Pilates
10.45 Sosa Dance Fitness
2pm Disco Fit
5.45pm Disco Pilates
6.30pm Zumba
7.30pm Clubbercise
8pm Body Blitz

TUESDAY
09.45 Clubbercise
6.30pm Circuits
7.15pm Burlex
7.15pm KPOPX

WEDNESDAY
09.45 Pilates
11.00 Dance Fit
2pm Mommy and me Bootcamp - babies and toddlers welcome, childcare a problem? then this is the session for you.
5.45pm Deep Hau2
6pm Trampoline Fitness
6.30pm Fitsteps
6.30pm Pound Fit
7.30pm Fitness Pilates
7.30pm Funky Hau2
7.30pm Abs Box

THURSDAY
09.45 Dance Fit
11.00 Fitness Pilates
5.45pm Yoga
6.30pm Sosa Dance Fitness
6.30pm Metafit
7.15pm Burlex
7.30pm Abs Box

FRIDAY
09.45 Zumba
2pm Mommy and me bootcamp
6.30pm Zumba

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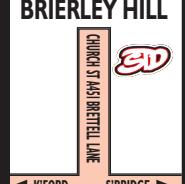
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Spring is target for road work

IT is hoped that work to improve safety along a road labelled as a 'renowned danger spot' can begin before spring, a councillor has revealed.

Plans were put forward last year to reconstruct Gospel End Street in Sedgley to highlight give-way signs and markings.

Numerous crashes have taken place along the road.

Councillor Michael Evans, who represents Sedgley, expects work to begin by May. He said:

"I have been chasing the council and was promised that something will be done in this financial year, which will be before May. Cars can travel too fast down there and it is still a safety concern, so I will continue to push for something to be done."

Apprentice prize for carpenter

A CARPENTER is feeling rather chipper after being named Apprentice of the Year by a home builder.

Ashley James, 22, of Upper Gornal, received the award from Barratt Homes. He won also won a £250 bonus after seeing off competition from dozens of apprentices.

He is studying at Stourbridge College for his NVQ Level 3 in Site Carpentry, while also working at Barratt's Oak Hill Mews development in Wednesbury.

FOCUS ON SEDGLEY & GORNAL

Councillor calls for action over trees and fly-tipping

A COUNCILLOR believes Dudley Council is not doing enough to cut back trees, particularly on Sedgley's Beacon estate.

Sedgley councillor Bill Etheridge, also a Member of the European Parliament, said: "There has been an ongoing problem for years. Trees are growing so big and they are not being cut back."

"A couple of months ago I wanted to raise a motion in council to tackle the issue, but Labour talked it out. It is easier to vote something in the European Parliament."

Councillor Etheridge claimed the council does not allow people to cut back the trees themselves due to health and safety but isn't doing the work itself.

Councillor Karen Shakespeare, cabinet member for environmental services, said: "The priority for the council is diseased and damaged trees. They are a priority for safety. Once all the diseased and damaged trees are tackled, we can focus on the other trees."

Meanwhile, Councillor Etheridge has also called for increased rubbish collections over future Christmas holiday periods to reduce mess caused by fly-tipping.

By Jamie Brassington

He claimed the current level of service in Dudley was inadequate following a spate of incidents when rubbish was dumped in his ward.

He highlighted an incident where old furniture had been dumped along with numerous black bags of assorted rubbish near Alder Coppice Primary School.

"The cost of providing an extra collection has to be set against the costs involved in cleaning up areas like this," he added.

"We need to think of ways to persuade people to dispose of their rubbish properly, not just through fines but possibly longer opening hours at the civic amenity site."

"Perhaps a furniture amnesty?"



Dudley councillor and UKIP Euro MP Bill Etheridge wants to see trees cut back, particularly in Sedgley

Memorial revamp is considered

A MEMORIAL garden for babies is set to be revamped following pressure from bereaved parents, after it was described as 'crowded and chaotic'.

Parents raised £200 for refurbishment of the Babies Memorial Garden at Gornal Wood Crematorium and Cemetery.

Dudley Council is considering spending £4,500 on a scheme.

Councillor Ian Kettle, cabinet member for planning and economic development, is due to make a decision on the refurbishment this week.

In a report, the council said the work would see the garden redesigned with more seating and an outdoor compartment to house precious objects left in tribute.

No ice required at kurling night

A CHARITY kurling event is taking place at a church hall in Sedgley.

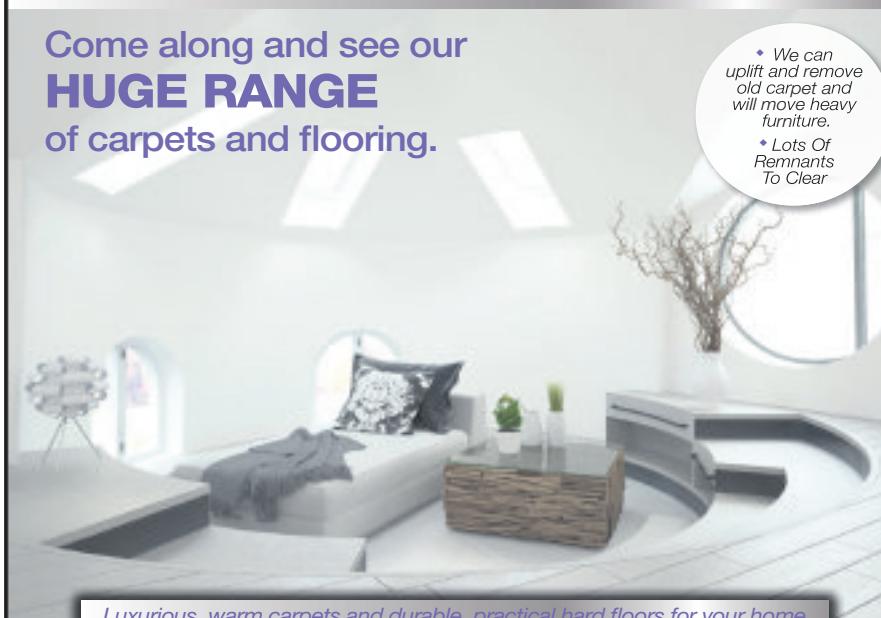
It will be held at All Saints Church Hall on January 20 from 7.30pm.

Kurling is adapted from the original curling game, where stones run on ice, to use bearings to go on any smooth surface. There will also be a fish and chip supper as part of the event.

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Baboon baby joins family at the zoo



Addis proudly shows off her newborn arrival Dendi, who was born just before Christmas at Dudley Zoo

KEEPERS have another mouth to feed at Dudley Zoo following the birth of Dendi, a gelada baboon.

The youngster is the second baby for 11-year-old Addis, who is also mum to three-year-old Billie. They are part of the Bank group.

Visitors can already spot the little one closely tucked up to mother in their award-winning half-acre natural hillside enclosure on the lower zoo site, which is home to father, Ebano, aged 13, females Jimma and Tana and youngsters Ambo and Gimbi.

Primate Keeper, Jade Reddall, said: "We're delighted that the latest addition to our Baboons on the Bank arrived just in time to be officially counted in this year's census."

"Addis is an experienced mum and is doing a fantastic job with her newborn. She is also making sure her eldest son, Billie, isn't feeling left out either with the baby, as we've spotted her giving him plenty of cuddles too."

Man who pestered his ex is jailed again

A DUDLEY man who would not leave his former partner alone, despite having started a fresh relationship with a woman who had his child, has been jailed.

Thomas Vry, of Brook Street, bombarded his ex with text messages and calls after their eight year relationship, during which they had two children, had ended.

In September 2016 he was convicted of harassment and banned from making contact with her. Nine days later the 25-year-old broke the terms of a restraining order by going to her home and making threats against her new partner, said Miss Joanne Barker, prosecuting.

He was arrested and bailed but struck again within days. He called at her home and place of work, sent more texts and even followed her car. He was given suspended jail sentence and new restraining order in November 2016, which he broke the following March by banging on her door to issue more threats.

Vry was jailed but, while on licence following his release, broke the order again. He was jailed but, while on licence following his release, broke the order again. You want your own relationship away from her but will not let her go. You want to have your cake and eat it."

By John Scott

on two further occasions. She said in a victim impact statement: "He has a new relationship and a new baby but constantly harasses me. I just want a chance to get on with the rest of my life."

Mr Anthony Bell, defending, said: "The offending is becoming less serious."

Dudley admitted breaking the terms of the order and was jailed for a year by Judge John Wait, who told him: "You constantly pester your former partner in a way that frightens her. This has an awful effect on her and your children."

"You want your own relationship away from her but will not let her go. You want to have your cake and eat it."

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President hands over the reins

Stourbridge Historical Society

THE annual general meeting on December 14 at Stourbridge Town Hall was attended by 73 members and nine visitors.

Retiring president Chris Glaze-Millis invested the incoming president, Michael Blamire-Brown, with the President's chain of office. Trevor Sidaway was elected as vice-president.

The retiring president was thanked for her service to the society. Her term in office had seen an increase in membership and interest in the society.

The meeting was addressed by historian, raconteur and jazz musician, John Sparry, whose house in Wall Heath is a museum and a bookshop. He worked on the principle of keeping things "in case they came in useful". John was inspired by the Colleyer Brothers Homer and Langley of the USA, well-known hoarders who had a Model T Ford in their front room and owned 17 pianos.

John produced a tin with tallow candles as once used by miners, as well as a tin from 1947 containing powdered egg. Other artefacts included a wire toasting fork, a Dutch oven and a bar of original Lever soap.

John also entertained the meeting with light-hearted jokes and readings. The next meeting will be held on January 18, at 7.30pm, in Stourbridge Town Hall. The speaker will be Julian Hunt on Worcestershire Turnpike Roads.

Chairman Sheila Evans welcomed everyone, thanking them for turning out in such inclement weather, with ice underfoot and pouring rain overhead. She updated everyone regarding secretary Pam's health and she was wished a speedy recovery and a return to the group in 2018.

The ladies enjoyed a sumptuous buffet prepared by the committee and then looked forward in eager anticipation to the raffle with prizes for all.

Josie thanked the committee for their hard work.

Everyone left in good spirits looking forward to an enjoyable programme in 2018 beginning on February 1. New members are always welcome. Meetings start at 7.45pm.

Following on from this visit, on December 18, a group of Legion members, who were Armed Forces Veterans and their wives, were invited to an afternoon tea and again were treated so well and with so much respect and consideration by staff and students alike. The food was prepared and served by the students and was excellent. Table decorations were also done by the students. Again, the school choir gave a concert consisting of Christmas songs with solo singers and all backed by the school band.

As a result of these visits the Kingswinford Branch and Summerhill School hope to engage in further activities in the future.

Praise is given for turnout in bad weather

Kingswinford Ladies Social Circle

THE Ladies met on December 14 at The Royal British Legion, Kingswinford, for their Christmas party.

Chairman Sheila Evans welcomed everyone, thanking them for turning out in such inclement weather, with ice underfoot and pouring rain overhead. She updated everyone regarding secretary Pam's health and she was wished a speedy recovery and a return to the group in 2018.

The ladies enjoyed a sumptuous buffet prepared by the committee and then looked forward in eager anticipation to the raffle with prizes for all.

Josie thanked the committee for their hard work.

Everyone left in good spirits looking forward to an enjoyable programme in 2018 beginning on February 1. New members are always welcome. Meetings start at 7.45pm.

CHAIRMAN Geoff Longmore opened the December meeting with a tribute to past chairman Pat Martin who sadly passed away on November 29.

Being that it was the Christmas social Geoff introduced Mary Bodfish with a very fitting talk on the story of 'Christmas past to Christmas present' an excellent talk with a great seasonal atmosphere. Meetings are

The Royal British Legion Staffordshire County Kingswinford Branch

BACK in November, three members of the Kingswinford Branch of the Royal British Legion were guests at a Year 7 Remembrance Assembly at Summerhill School.

They were met by the Head Boy and Head Girl and escorted to a small conference room before speaking to a number of students who showed a genuine interest in the Legion, what it stood for and the members' roles in it.

Afterwards, the whole of Year 7 applauded the Legion members into the assembly hall. The assembly itself had been researched and was presented by staff and students. It highlighted several local soldiers who had lost their lives in the First World War and was very moving.

This was followed by a short concert by the school choir and, as they left the hall, Legion members were again applauded. Throughout they were treated with the utmost respect.

Following on from this visit, on December 18, a group of Legion members, who were Armed Forces Veterans and their wives, were invited to an afternoon tea and again were treated so well and with so much respect and consideration by staff and students alike. The food was prepared and served by the students and was excellent. Table decorations were also done by the students. Again, the school choir gave a concert consisting of Christmas songs with solo singers and all backed by the school band.

As a result of these visits the Kingswinford Branch and Summerhill School hope to engage in further activities in the future.

Tributes paid to past chairman

Ambleside History Society

held in the Furnace Theatre at the Ruskin Glasshouse Arts Centre, Wollaston Road, Ambleside. Visitors are always welcome at a small entrance charge of £2.

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Ghostly goings-on are brought to book

A BLACK Country author has tackled the paranormal world again for his latest work.

Andrew Homer, 62, from Sedgley, has been writing since he was in his 20s. The author and historian now has four books under his belt – with his latest 'Black Country Ghosts and Hauntings' acting as a guide to the best paranormal spots in the Black Country.

Andrew, who also designed a ghost tracking app, GhostNav, said: "The book has been doing extremely well."

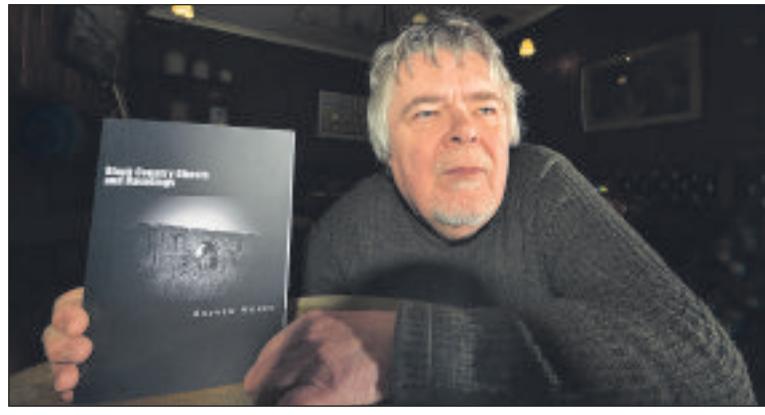
"It sold loads before Christmas, the Black Country Hub sold a lot, the Black Country museum, the

Dudley Canal Trust and it's been doing extremely well on Amazon as well."

"I've been collecting the stories for many years, so many of them are stories that I already knew. In terms of writing the book that took about a year but I had got most of the research collected before that."

A gazetteer, it is divided into different areas of the Black Country and features more than 150 separate stories. One tells of how a ghost was discovered in 1994 at the Grade II listed Victorian style pub The Beacon Hotel in Sedgley.

It is available on Amazon at £8.99.



Andrew Homer with a copy of his latest book, *Black Country Ghosts and Hauntings*

Drug addict stole cash in home of pensioner

A CONWOMAN who stole a pensioner's food and heating money after tricking her way into her home – leaving her forced to borrow cash from family to eat – has been jailed for three years.

Selina Spencer knocked at the 67-year-old's bungalow in the Black Country asking for a pen and paper in March last year, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

When the victim turned her back to fetch the items, 32-year-old Spencer 'barged her way' into the property in Woodcross, near Coseley, and asked for a carrier bag.

Mr Mark Phillips, prosecuting, explained that while the pensioner was in the kitchen, Spencer slipped into the living room and stole £120 from a purse on the table. Spencer then said she had to go and fled.

The victim had to ask family for help as the amount stolen, her pension money, was all she had to live on for the week.

In an impact statement read to the court, she said: "I had only that money. I've had to borrow money from my family to eat."

Fearful

She said the theft had knocked her confidence, she was worried about answering her front door and fearful that Spencer would return.

The pensioner was described as 'being confused sometimes' which made her vulnerable. She lived in a row of bungalows occupied mainly by the elderly and Spencer would have known that, claimed Mr Phillips.

The victim said Spencer was in the property for around 10 minutes and had seemed 'fairly friendly'.

Spencer, who lives with her partner on wasteground in Bilston, was picked up



Selina Spencer – jailed

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Simple steps homeowners can take now to protect their assets

Head of April King Legal Paul King explains why some homeowners are doing too little, too late to protect their hard-earned assets.



Paul King, Head of April King Legal

1. Care Cost Fees

A lot of people are still unaware that if they need care in later life, their assets will be means-tested by the local authority to help pay for these services. This goes back to the Community Care Act 1990, which came into force in 1993. If someone requires social care in later life, the local authority will look to use the assets of a person until they get down to a lower limit of £14,250, when the local authority will take over the fees.

Paul knows this all too well, after experiencing this personally. "My own grandmother sadly passed away recently at the age of 92. My grandfather had died many years earlier and left everything to her."

When she needed care in the last six years of her life, because my grandfather had left everything to her, the house and all the estate were counted in the local authority's means test.

Our clients tell us, 'We've worked hard all our lives, why should the local authority get it all?'

Just as she died, she had gone down to that lower limit of £14,250 – and that's all that her children inherited."

There are many myths about the steps people can take to protect their assets from being used like this. The main one is that a parent should simply sign their house over to the children now, so it won't be taken into consideration for means testing. That's just not true.

Local authorities will actually look to see if you've 'deliberately deprived' yourself of an asset by giving property away, going back over any period in time.

Sometimes people think if the gift is made seven years prior then the house is safe.

This is not so as the seven-year rule only applies to Inheritance Tax and not local authority care.

The solution is for couples to simply not leave everything to each other in the first place. Paul continues: "What my grandfather could have done is leave his half of the house in trust to his children, stating that they couldn't have it while his wife, my grandmother, was still alive. We call these Property Trust Wills. If my grandfather had left his half of the house in trust to the children then when my grandmother subsequently received care in her later life she would have only been means tested on her own half of the house, but my grandfather's half would have been safe."

Why should he have to contribute his half when he didn't receive any care?

The important factor is that couples need to act in advance. Once one party dies or loses mental capacity, through a stroke for example, they are no longer in a position to do this legitimate and straightforward type of planning.

It is therefore important for couples to act now even if they may not foresee care fees being an issue."

Paul goes on to explain a further important point. Most clients he sees are surprised to learn that remarriage usually cancels a will and makes the new spouse next in line to inherit, ahead of their own children!

Protecting your half of the house in this way, he suggests, ensures that your children ultimately inherit when the survivor dies.

"Had my grandmother remarried after the death of my grandfather the whole estate could have passed sideways out of the family," says Paul.

It's another important reason for home-owning couples to upgrade to a Property Trust Will.

2. Bloodline Trust Wills

The majority of April King's clients have already made standard "mirror wills" with other firms before approaching the firm. A mirror will is when a couple leave everything to each other on the first death, then to the children when the second partner dies. But modern family life means these type of wills leave a lot to chance.

Explains Paul: "If I have a mirror will leaving everything to my wife and she remarries or goes into care after my death then either the new husband or the local authority are likely to inherit most, if not all, of my estate ahead of my children."

Even if my children are named in my mirror will it is by no means certain that they will inherit anything.

Once again, this is because a remarriage would cancel the will my wife had previously made with me and make the new husband next-of-kin. This often comes as a big shock to my clients who had perhaps thought that all was in order and that the family bloodline would one day inherit.

The same is true for thinking that their children and/or grandchildren will one day benefit under a mirror will. If any of your children should die leaving everything to their husband or wife and that son-in-law or daughter-in-law should then remarry, then your grandchildren would be the ones to lose out under the line of inheritance.

Worse still, someone else's grandchildren would be in line to receive the benefit of all your years of hard work!

I've experienced this in my own family and I'm sure most people have had similar experiences or heard of someone who has. Bloodline trusts will give greater protection to your children."

Paul continues: "These things can be avoided by having a bloodline trusts will. Under these types of wills your children have complete control

and access to the inheritance they receive from you but give added protection from the twists and turns of modern family life. The wording in these wills states that any money left over on their demise must pass to any children born of them – your grandchildren."

3. Lasting Power of Attorney

Paul explains how people often get confused thinking that, because they have made a will, their executors can also deal with assets if there is illness, stroke or some other form of incapacity while they are still alive.

"Everyone should actually have two documents – a will that deals with their estate on death, and a lasting power of attorney that deals with their estate during their lifetime," he says.

The lasting power of attorney is a relatively new introduction and is divided into two parts – one deals with finance, the other deals with health and welfare. In many ways it's similar to a passport; a document that's registered now and one which can be physically handed to the attorneys should the need arise. It allows the attorneys, perhaps the children, to deal with banks and pension companies etc should their parent become incapacitated, but also to deal with matters such as where the parent should be living and how they receive care. Your attorneys, again perhaps your children, must legally act in your best interests at all times. You can choose a number of attorneys to act, either jointly or independently, and April King advises on the various options available.

Couples are often surprised to discover that even joint bank accounts can be frozen until the bank sees sight of a lasting power of attorney document

Having a lasting power of attorney removes the burden on children should ill-health happen further down the line. It helps a family deal with bank accounts and so on during a parent's lifetime and ceases on death. Crucially, you have to complete a lasting power of attorney while they are still in good mental health.

If someone becomes ill through say, a stroke or dementia, this option is lost and the family would have to apply for a order from the Court of Protection – a drawn out and expensive process. It is therefore a good idea for clients to plan ahead and remove any future burden from the family.

Once again, all adults should be thinking of this, particularly where there are children or a business involved. It's not just something to think about when you get older, that's the challenge for us.

People think 'I'm not ill, why do I need to make a power of attorney?'

But they're missing the point. This is a document that has to be done in advance. Paul adds: "The next part is to appoint the attorneys, your children. Don't forget, your children can be the executors of your will and attorneys as well. The lasting power of attorney remains in place until you die unless you want to cancel it. Once it's registered, you don't have to worry if you then develop some debilitating illness. A burden has been removed from the family at an already difficult time."



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Riddle of 'Bella' murder is now set for the stage

IT has been the subject of a TV documentary, play, book, songs, numerous newspaper articles and endless intrigue.

Now the story of an unsolved local murder involving the discovery of a skull is headed for the London stage.

It was 75 years ago that four teenage boys looking for birds' eggs on Lord Cobham's Hagley Hall estate found the human skull, still with hair and teeth attached, in a hollowed-out Wych Elm tree.

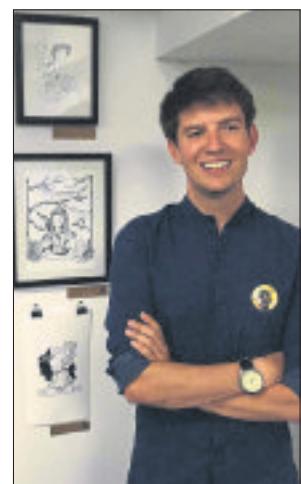
The lads returned to their homes in the Wollescote area of Stourbridge, worried they would get into trouble for poaching but the youngest of them, Tom Willets, found the secret too hard to keep and told his parents.

Police were called and found the near-complete skeleton of a young woman, believed to have been strangled around 18 months earlier, inside the tree. In nearby fields they found her severed hand.

Obelisk

Afterwards, graffiti posing the cryptic question 'who put Bella down the Wych Elm' began appearing on walls around the West Midlands, most famously on the Hagley obelisk. But the riddle of both the woman's identity and that of her killer have continued to confound police and armchair detectives alike.

The mystery brought comedian Steve Punt to the Express & Star in Wolverhampton when he launched his own investigation for his BBC Radio 4 series Punt PI, looking into the involvement of journalist Wilfred Byford-Jones, whose coverage in the '50s opened up new lines of inquiry.



The Wych Elm in Hagley Woods, scene of the gruesome discovery

They mystery has also inspired several musical compositions including a musical staged around a decade ago.

Theatre director Tom Drayton, 26, who teaches at Worcester University, is the latest to show an interest in the enigma which has spawned wide-ranging theories about who Bella was and why she was murdered.

His production is due to open at The Space Theatre in London in March and potentially move to the Edinburgh Fringe this summer. He is also in talks with Midland theatres about bringing the story 'home' before the end of the year.

Mr Drayton said: "There's been a surge in interest in real crime stories and it's something we'd been exploring. The fact that this murder remains unsolved is another factor. It's really elemental: a skeleton inside a tree found by four boys during the Second World War. It sets you thinking."

Various theories include that 'Bella' was the victim of a ritual murder using witchcraft, that she may have been a Nazi spy or a murdered Birmingham prostitute. Mr Drayton added: "This story takes us from spies in Birmingham to singers in Berlin. It's so much more than a myth."

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After Laughter, we are heading to gig

Grammy Award-winners Paramore returned with their fifth album, After Laughter, in spring 2017.

The new wave group from Tennessee topped the American rock charts and enjoyed a top 10 hit in the main charts on both sides of the Atlantic as critics were dazzled.

The Observer said: 'After Laughter could be one of the year's best pop albums', the Sunday Times Culture added: 'After Laughter is a blast', NME wrote 'a pop triumph', The Sun said 'their best music in years' and DIY awarded it full marks and described it as 'perfect'.

The trio – Hayley Williams, Zac Farro and Taylor York – have returned to the UK for a five-date, whistle-stop arena tour, which reaches Arena Birmingham on Sunday.

The shows are the band's first since June last year, when they played five intimate gigs – including one at the Royal Albert Hall – to coincide with the release of After Laughter.

Having previously performed sold out shows at the O2 Arena, Wembley Arena, and co-headlined Reading & Leeds Festivals in 2014, fans are in for something special.

Their recent show at the Royal Albert Hall was a triumph with DIY writing: 'They say what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger and tonight, against the iconic backdrop of the Royal Albert Hall, Paramore proved to be at their most powerful yet'. The Evening Standard added: 'Eighties-style synths and sleek guitars ruled the night at this animated gig'. Q described it as 'perfect'.

Paramore are four-times Grammy nominees and won the Best Rock Song trophy at the 57th Annual Awards. They have long established themselves as international rock superstars.

Their previous self-titled album Paramore hit number one in the UK and US upon release, and showcased a string of blockbuster singles including two two-times RIAA platinum-certified hits, plus smashes Still Into You and Ain't It Fun.

The band has enjoyed a truly remarkable run of critically-acclaimed albums and singles since coming together in Nashville in 2004, from 2005's gold-certified debut, All We Know Is Falling and 2007's two-times platinum-certified breakthrough, RIOT! – with its three-times platinum-certified hit, Misery Business, as well as the platinum-certified singles crushcrushcrush and That's What You Get – to 2008's worldwide platinum Decode and 2009's platinum-certified Brand New Eyes and its Grammy-nominated smash, The Only Exception.

Frontwoman Hayley has grown up in the spotlight. She formed the band following the divorce of her parents, when she was 14, and signed her first record deal a year later when Atlantic snapped her up.

A poetic and sensitive lyricist, she helped the band to flourish alongside peers like My Chemical Romance and Fall Out Boy.

The band took their time over After Laughter, following the international success of their self-titled 2013 record.

Hayley says: "I didn't even know if we were going to make another record... There was a moment when I didn't even want it to happen. Then it was like, I want it to happen, but I don't know how we're going to do it."

The songs were written following a lengthy period of introspection by Hayley, who went into therapy. "For the first time in my life, there

We'll be over on the first flight – Paramore are at Arena



wasn't a pinhole of light at the end of the tunnel. I thought, I just wish everything would stop. It wasn't in the sense of, I'm going to take my life. It was just hopelessness. Like, 'What's the point?' I don't think I understood how dangerous hopelessness is. Everything hurts."

The band were keen to make a break with the past and their re-branding involved bringing in an LA designer, Scott Cleary. He was keen to underscore the band's new sound and direction by creating an impossible trident optical illusion as the album's artwork.

"The band came to me when they were recording the album in LA. We've been friends for a while so we were spending a lot of time together while they were in town from Nashville. They asked me if I'd be interested in doing the album artwork and band re-brand, to which I jumped at the chance. They had some ideas around the 80s vibes of the record, and a few visual references they were feeling. I did the usual 'listen to the record, write/draw a bunch of stuff' and came up with the idea of a landscape where colors, shapes and textures



would represent sounds and moments on the record. They were sold from my first concept, which is very rare, but just shows we were all on the same page. The band were great to work with—it helped being friends, as I didn't need to go through a bunch of people to get fast opinions. I created a computer-generated layout of the whole artwork, then recreated each element in real life (lots of crafting), photographed it, then brought it back into the landscape. Sonically, the record is very 'real' and I wanted the imagery details to have that finishing touch."

After Laughter dealt with a range of topics, including death. Hayley was determined to mull over the things on her mind – and also wanted to become a kinder person.

"Man, I was just taught to be nice. I'm going to be gone one day, and I have to accept that tomorrow isn't promised. Am I OK with how I'm living today? It's the only thing I can help."

● For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.

There wasn't a pinhole of light at the end of the tunnel

Lucy O'Byrne as Maria



Do-Re-Maria returns

THE hills are alive with The Sound of Music again as the wholesome alpine fresh musical returns with one of the most popular Marias of recent years in the spotlight.

Lucy O'Byrne, who returns to the iconic role of Maria, found fame when she was the runner up of BBC One's The Voice in 2015. With Will.i.am as her mentor Lucy made history as the first classical singer to reach the final.

The Irish singer won rave reviews for her performance as Maria Von Trapp in the 2016 UK touring production of The Sound of Music, being hailed as 'quite possibly the best Maria since Julie Andrews herself' by The Scotsman.

Following the tour Lucy won the coveted role of Fantine in Cameron Mackintosh's world record-breaking musical phenomenon Les Misérables, which she performed in the West End until earlier this year.

Neil McDermott takes the role of Captain Von Trapp,

played by Christopher Plummer in the much-loved 1965 film. Neil played the recurring role of Ryan Molloy in EastEnders. He is also a regular on stage with roles in the West End including Chief Weasel in The Wind in the Willows and Lord Farquaad in Shrek.

This famous show began with the true story of the Von Trapp Family Singers and their escape from the Nazis after their beloved Austria became part of the Third Reich. Baroness Maria von Trapp's 1949 autobiography inspired Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse to create the Broadway musical in 1959.

The unforgettable score features some of the most memorable songs ever performed on stage, including Edelweiss, My Favorite Things, Do-Re-Mi, Climb Ev'ry Mountain, So Long, Farewell and, of course, The Sound of Music. Produced by Bill Kenwright, this production is at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday.

Coward's way at Birmingham Rep

This weekend marks the final opportunities to catch Birmingham Repertory Theatre's winter hit, The Hundred And One Dalmatians.

Once Cruella and co finally give up on their diabolical plan to turn those adorable puppies into a winter coat, following Saturday's final performance of the family favourite show, Birmingham Rep swings into its new season.

One of Birmingham's premier amateur theatre companies, Hall Green Little Theatre, stage Noel

A night of Glee with Abigailah

One of the world's fastest rising female comics will make a rare West Midlands appearance when she features at Birmingham's Glee Club this weekend.

Abigailah Schamaun will feature tomorrow night (Friday) when she joins a bill with Jake Lambert and Fin Taylor. Abigailah grew up in rural Ohio and at the tender age of 18 moved to New York to seek her fame and fortune. She didn't find it so moved to London where she has won acclaim as a stand-up comedian and actor.



Dig in to this gentle comedy boxed set

All three series of gentle comedy Detectorists are now available on DVD in a boxed set which is well worth digging into. Mackenzie Crook and Toby Jones, two fine character actors, play bickering pals who are devoted to metal detecting, both dream of making that big hoard-like find. They face difficulties in their personal lives and make enemies in their hunt for ancient gold. This gem was shown on BBC Four and may have passed by some viewers who would appreciate its slow burn comedy. It's a reminder that The Office's Mackenzie Crook, soon to be seen as a terrifying druid in Sky Atlantic's Britannia, is a master of comic timing. He also wrote and directed. Guests include Diana Rigg and Peaky Blinders' Aimee-Ffion Edwards. The three series and Christmas special are available in a boxed set, as is a DVD of series three.

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SUNDAY'S TV JANUARY 14

CHOICE



James Norton

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. *7.35 Match of the Day* (R) **9.00** *The Andrew Marr Show* **10.00** *The Big Questions*, **11.00** Regional Programme, **12.15** *Bargain Hunt*. (R) **1.00** BBC News: Weather, **1.15** Money for Nothing, (R) **2.00** Escape to the Country, (R) **2.30** The Truth About Looking Good, (R) **3.30** Big Cats, (R) **4.30** Songs of Praise, **5.05** Attenborough and the Sea Dragon. (R) **6.05** BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 Countryfile. The team reports from the Somerset Levels, where Matt Baker discovers a project to protect the common crane, a bird that now thrives in the area thanks to an unlikely partnership. Anita Rani meets an apple farmer, Adam Henson prepares for winter on his farm, and Charlotte Smith reports on the dangers of swimming in the sea. Plus, the first in a series of features on life as a rural vet.

7.30 Still Open All Hours. Granville tries to convince Mr Newbold that Mrs Featherstone has an exciting past. Eric and Cyril take up tandem cycling, and Leroy's latest task involves dressing up as a banana.

8.00 The Coronation. Documentary about the queen's coronation in 1953, featuring an interview with the monarch, who shares her memories and discusses seeing her father crowned as a child.

9.00 McMafia. Benny uncovers information about heroin being smuggled from Pakistan into India. He does not realise that Dilly is spying on him, and after a robbery, gains all the information he needs to pull off a heist - however Semiony warns that it is Alex's decision whether the operation goes ahead. Karin is suspicious about the fund Alex is using to move Semiony's money around, while Rebecca becomes concerned when she discovers Alex has a secret second phone. In Prague, Vadim resolves to find out who Benes is in league with.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the day's two Premier League matches - Bournemouth v Arsenal at the Vitality Stadium and Liverpool v Manchester City at Anfield.

11.30 Man Like Mobeen. New comes. Sitcom about a reformed drug dealer trying to look after his younger sister. Mobeen faces a moral quandary.

11.50 Man Like Mobeen. Aks is suspended from school for fighting, and Mobeen's uncles urge him to consider an arranged marriage to provide the girl with a much-needed female role model.

12.15 Weather for the Week Ahead.

12.20 BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Coast. (R) **7.00** *The Instant Gardener*, **7.45** *Gardeners' World*, **8.15** *Greatest Gardens*, (R) **8.50** *Countryfile*, (R) **9.45** *Saturday Kitchen* Best Bites, **11.15** *Parmesan Blanc*: How to Cook Well, (R) **11.45** Food & Drink. (R) **12.15** *MOTD Extra*, **1.00** *Live Snooker*: The Masters. Mark Selby v Mark Williams, **5.35** *Ski Sunday*.

6.21 Film: Mr Holmes. (2015) Premiere. An elderly Sherlock Holmes retires to a seaside farmhouse in the aftermath of the Second World War, and struggles to cope with his diminished faculties. Assisted by his housekeeper's inquisitive son, he tries to piece together the events of the one case that he failed to solve. Period mystery based on Mitch Cullin's novel *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, starring Ian McKellen.

8.00 Yellowstone: The Wildest Winter. Kate Humble, Patrick Ayre, scientists and wildlife cameramen examine the changing seasons at Yellowstone National Park during 2016, and the effect on the local American wildlife. In the first episode, Patrick follows the grizzly bears, who are taking a risk with the weather by leaving their winter dens early. Meanwhile, Kate gets to grips with the science behind this frozen season. (R)

9.00 Dragons' Den. Debrah Meaden, Peter Jones, Touker Suleyman, Tej Lalvani and Jenny Campbell once again take their places in the boardroom, as more would-be entrepreneurs pitch their business plans. This time, a former bricklayer hopes his mortar-board invention will help him build a working relationship with a Dragon, and a mother-of-two seeks an investment for her child-tracking device. Plus, a hopeful snack industry pioneer pitches crisps inspired by astronauts, and a 25-year-old designer enlists the aid of a Paralympian to demonstrate her product designed for wheelchair users.

10.05 Film: The Water Diviner. (2014) Premiere. An Australian travels to Turkey after the First World War to discover what happened to his sons. Period drama, directed by and starring Russell Crowe.

11.45 Snooker: The Masters.

12.35 Snooker: The Masters - Extra.

2.35 Sign Zone: Question Time. (R) **3.35** *Holby City*. (R) **4.35** *This Is BBC Two*.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** *Bottom Knockers* Street, (R) **6.20** *Bottom Knockers* Street, (R) **6.35** *Dino Dana*, (R) **6.50** Super 4, **7.00** *Signed Stories*: Share a Story, (R) **7.05** *Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs Sinister Six*, **7.30** *Scrambled!*: The Tom and Jerry Show, (R) **7.55** *Scrambled!*: Spy School, **9.05** *Scrambled!*: Wisharf, (R) **9.25** *ITV News*, **9.30** *River Monsters*, (R) **10.00** *Peston on Sunday*, **11.00** *The Martin Lewis Money Show*, (R) **12.00** *The Voice UK*, (R) **1.30** *ITV News*, **2.10** *Britain's Brightest Family*, (R) **2.10** *The Cruise*: Return to the Mediterranean, (R) **2.40** *Film: Death Becomes Her*, (1992) Black comedy fantasy starring Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep, **4.35** *Regional Programme*, **Weather**, **4.45** *ITV News*, **Weather**, **5.00** *The Chase*: Celebrity Special! (R)

6.00 Dancing on Ice. Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby present the skating challenge, with judges Jayne Torvill, Christopher Dean, Jason Gardiner and Ashley Banjo assessing the celebrities' performance on the ice. This week features the first skate-off of the series, as two contestants and their professional partners compete to avoid being eliminated from the contest.

8.00 Vera. The detective investigates when a seemingly beloved resident of a coastal community is fatally driven off the road, and digs up the victim's past in the hope of unmasking the killer. Crime drama based on Ann Cleeves' series of novels, starring Brenda Blethyn.

10.00 ITV News: Weather.

10.15 Peston on Sunday. Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with Allegra Stratton. (R)

11.10 Next of Kin. A GP's brother is kidnapped on his way home to the UK from his clinic in Lahore, and a counterterrorism unit is anxious to trace his son. Thriller, with Archie Panjabi. (R)

12.05 Great Art. Tim Marlow explores the legacy of 19th-century art collector Paul Durand-Ruel. (R) **1.00** *Jackpot 247*. Viewers get the chance to participate in live interactive gaming from the comfort of their sofas, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.00** *Sunday Night at the Palladium*. With Maroon 5, Earth, Wind & Fire and Ella Henderson. (R) **3.50** *ITV Nightscreen*.

CHANNEL 4

6.00 Kirstie's Handmade Treasures. (R) **6.10** *The King of Queens*, (R) **6.35** *The King of Queens*, (R) **7.00** *Everybody Loves Raymond*, (R) **7.30** *Everybody Loves Raymond*, (R) **7.55** *Frasier*, (R) **8.30** *Frasier*, (R) **9.00** *Frasier*, (R) **9.30** *Sunday Brunch*, **12.30** *Jamie's Quick & Easy Food*, (R) **1.05** *The Simpsons*, (R) **1.35** *The Simpsons*, (R) **2.05** *Film*: Two by Two, (2015) Premiere. Animated adventure, with the voice of Tara Flynn. **3.50** *Channel 4 News*, **4.15** *Darts*: BDO Lakeside World Professional Championships. Rob Walker presents live coverage of the men's final.

8.00 The Biggest Little Railway in the World. The miniature train begins its 1-metre journey, as the train ferry built in the previous episode does not work as well as expected. Further down the line, the track teams have to work quickly in heavy rain while fending off midges, while other engineers have to find a way to span a 60-metre viaduct that could flood at any moment.

9.00 SAS: Who Dares Wins. The remaining recruits are put through rounds of grueling training by special forces instructors in Morocco's Atlas Mountains. They must abseil more than 200 feet from the top of the El Mansour Dam, and undertake a grueling mountain climb in high temperatures while each carrying 40 pounds on their back. They are also forced to accept their own personal weaknesses and find ways to turn them to their advantage, as the instructors will be looking for those who are able to find strength in adversity.

10.00 The Big Fat Quiz of Everything. Vic Reeves, Bob Mortimer, Claudia Winkleman, Miranda Hart, Jonathan Ross and Nish Kumar answer Jimmy Carr's questions on the past 100,000 years of human history. (R)

12.00 Film: Killing Them Softly. (2012) Crime thriller, starring Brad Pitt. **1.45** *Grand Designs Australia*. A family builds a new home on a plot in the garden. (R) **2.40** *Location, Location, Location*. Catching up with people who were looking for a home in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. (R) **3.35** *KOTV Boxing Weekly*, **4.00** *Gillette World Sport*, **4.30** *Coast vs Country*. A couple look for a property in Cornwall either by the sea or in a rural area. (R) **5.25** *Four in a Bed*. (R) **5.50** *Kirstie's Handmade Treasures*. (R) **5.55** *3rd Rock from the Sun*. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! Little Princess, **6.15** *Wanda and the Alien*, (R) **6.25** *Poppy Cat*, (R) **6.35** *Wesper*, (R) **6.40** *Milkshake! Monkey*, (R) **6.45** *Milkshake!* *Popping About*, (R) **6.50** *Simon*, (R) **7.00** *Peppa Pig*, (R) **7.05** *Paw Patrol*, (R) **7.15** *Thomas & Friends*, (R) **7.25** *Fireman Sam*, (R) **7.40** *Oily the Little White Van*, (R) **7.45** *Blaze and the Monster Machines*, (R) **8.10** *Paw Patrol*, (R) **8.25** *Nella the Princess Knight*, **8.40** *Noddy Toyland Detective*, (R) **9.00** *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom*, (R) **9.10** *Shimmer and Shine*, (R) **9.25** *Digby Dragon*, (R) **9.45** *Peppa Pig*, (R) **9.55** *Peppa Pig*, (R) **10.00** *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, **10.35** *Football on 5*: The Championship, (R) **11.30** *Football on 5*: Goal Rush, (R) **12.00** *Blind Date*, (R) **1.00** *Will & Grace*, (R) **1.30** *Film*: Are We There Yet? (2005) Family comedy, starring Ice Cube. **3.15** *Film*: Dennis the Menace Strikes Again, (1998) Family comedy sequel, starring Justin Cooper. **4.40** *Film*: *Garfield*, (2004) Family comedy, with the voice of Bill Murray. **6.10** *Film*: *Pixels*, (2015) Premiere. Aliens declare war on Earth having seen video games from the 1980s and interpreted them as a threat. Their attack comes in the form of deadly recreations of classic video games, so the US government recruits four former arcade champions to repel the attack. Sci-fi comedy, starring Adam Sandler and Peter Dinklage. Edited for violence.

7.10 5 News Update.

7.15 Film: Pixels. (2015) Concluded.

8.00 Billionaire Babies: 24 Carat Kids.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Celebrity Big Brother. Highlights of another day for the illustrious inhabitants as they cope with the day-to-day complications of life under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, while also dealing with one another's quirks and foibles.

10.05 Film: Grown Ups 2. (2013) Four friends try to relieve their youth, but find their kids have a thing or two to teach them on the last day of school. Comedy sequel, with Adam Sandler and Chris Rock.

11.55 One Night with My Ex. Suspicions of cheating destroyed the trust between Kenya and Said, and they have not seen each other for two years. They are reunited to talk about what went wrong. (R)

12.55 SuperCasino. **3.10** *GPs: Behind Closed Doors*. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 *Only Connect*, **7.30** *University Challenge*, **8.00** *Voyager*: To the Final Frontier, **9.00** *Neil Armstrong - First Man on the Moon*, **10.00** *The Sky at Night*, **10.30** *Churchill's First World War*, **12.00** *The Story of Maths*, **2.00** *Neil Armstrong - First Man on the Moon*, **3.00** *Voyager*: To the Final Frontier, **4.00** *Close*

ITV2

12.35 *Take Me Out 1.50* *The Voice UK*, **3.20** *Film*: *The Smurfs 2* (2013), **4.20** *FYI Daily 4.25* *Film*: *The Smurfs 2* (2013)

5.25 *Film*: *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002), **6.25** *FYI Daily 6.30* *Film*: *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002), **9.00** *Ibiza Weekender*, **10.00** *Family Guy*, **11.30** *American Dad!*, **12.30** *Film*: *That Awkward Moment* (2014), **1.30** *FYI Daily 1.35* *Film*: *That Awkward Moment* (2014), **2.20** *Teleshopping*, **5.50** *ITV2 Nightscreen*

ITV3

11.25 *Foyles War*, **6.00** *Agatha Christie's Marple 8.00* *Secret Life of Dogs*, **9.00** *Tonight at the London Palladium*, **10.00** *Film: Chicago* (2002), **12.15** *Lewis*, **2.15** *Blue Murder*, **3.30** *Road to Avonlea*, **5.10** *On the Buses*, **5.35** *ITV3 Nightscreen*

ITV4

11.50 *Pawn Stars*, **1.40** *Hornblower*, **3.50** *Film*: *Kelly's Heroes* (1970), **4.50** *FYI Daily 4.55* *Film*: *Kelly's Heroes* (1970)

6.55 *Film*: *The Adjustment Bureau* (2011), **7.55** *FYI Daily 8.00* *Film*: *The Adjustment Bureau* (2011), **9.00** *Film*: *The Krays* (1990), **10.55** *FYI Daily 10.10* *Film*: *The Krays* (1990), **11.20** *Film*: *Inside Man* (2006), **12.20** *FYI Daily 12.25* *Film*: *Inside Man* (2006), **2.00** *The Car Chasers*, **3.45** *ITV4 Nightscreen*, **3.00** *Teleshopping*

E4

11.00 *Melissa & Joey*, **1.30** *The Goldbergs*, **4.00** *The Big Bang Theory*, **8.00** *Film*: *Life of Pi* (2012), **10.30** *The Big Bang Theory*, **11.30** *Gogglebox*, **1.35** *Rude Tube*, **2.30** *First Dates*, **3.25** *Holyroaks*

Film4

11.00 *Master of the World* (1961), **1.00** *The Core* (2003), **3.45** *Hulk* (2003), **6.25** *The Book Thief* (2013), **Second World War** drama, starring Sophie Nelisse, **9.00** *Non-Stop* (2014) An air marshal on a transatlantic flight searches for a terrorist threatening to kill the passengers one by one. Action thriller, with Liam Neeson and Julianne Moore, **11.05** *Blood Ties* (2013) Crime drama, starring Clive Owen and Billy Crudup, **1.40** *Beauty* (2011), **3.55** *Close*

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FILM CHOICES**MONDAY****The Wrong Mother, Channel 5, 3.15pm**

Kaylene gives birth to twins after in vitro fertilisation, but when she needs help with home care, the nurse she hires turns out to be the unhinged woman who donated the eggs for the procedure. Thriller, starring Vanessa Marcil and Stephen Snedden. (2017)

TUESDAY**False Pretenses, Channel 5, 3.15pm**

A woman's life is left in tatters when her wealthy husband finds he has been conned out of millions by his best friend, and kills himself. Escaping the painful memories, she moves elsewhere and slowly begins to rebuild her life - until the conman hunts her down. Thriller, starring Peta Wilson. (2004)

WEDNESDAY**A Murderer Upstairs, Channel 5, 3.15pm**

A mother protects her stepdaughter after the teenager witnesses the murder of her best friend. But before long, she comes to the terrifying possibility that the girl may be the actual killer. Thriller, starring Josie Davis, Tiera Skovbye and Cameron Bancroft. (2017)



Spring Breakers, Friday, Channel 4, 12.20am

THURSDAY**Her Dark Past, Channel 5, 3.15pm**

After a shooting incident leaves her in a coma, a woman awakens after three months with no memory of her true identity. Even more of a puzzle is what she could have done for someone to want her dead, and as she rediscovers her dark past, she must earn redemption along the way. Mystery thriller, starring Anna Lisa Phillips and Kevin Ryan. (2016)

FRIDAY**Spring Breakers, Channel 4, 12.20am**

Four teenage girls are desperate to enjoy a wild spring holiday in Florida, and resort to robbery to fund it. Their brush with the law brings them to the attention of a sleazy gangster, who seduces them further into a life of crime while giving them the hedonistic experiences they crave. Drama, starring James Franco, Selena Gomez, Vanessa Hudgens, Ashley Benson, Rachel Korine, Gucci Mane, Heather Morris and Ash Lendzion. (2012)

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Channel 4 look to carry on the winning formula

In 2012, to celebrate its 30th anniversary, Channel 4 broadcast a 'mash-up night' in which some of its biggest personalities popped up in one another's shows.

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and John Bishop appeared in Channel 4 Newsreader, do River Cottage's Alan Carr joined Location, Location's Kirstie Allsopp to poke around other people's houses. The Million Pound Drop was hosted by Phil Spencer with Davina McCall playing the game, and the Made in Chelsea cast staged Come Dine With Me.

However, the most memorable of the job-swapping programmes was the merging of comedy panel show 8 Out of 10 Cats and long-running daytime quiz Countdown.

Jimmy Carr took over as host for the one-off special alongside short-skirted purveyor of numbered and lettered tiles Rachel Riley, while Cats' captains Sean Lock and Jon Richardson competed as team captains and Joe Wilkinson joined Susie Dent in Dictionary Corner.

The show was an unexpected success - it was the second most watched programme on Channel 4 that week.

Since then, 92 episodes of 'Catsdown' have aired and it was even nominated for a British Comedy Award in 2014.

So what has made the show so popular over the years?

The participants seem to think that it is down to their chemistry and banter with each other, and in Lock's case, not really caring about the result.

"It's a bit odd because normally you go on Countdown, you lose, and you've never seen again," he said in an interview with Time Out in 2013.

"Whereas I go on Countdown, I lose, and I'm back again, to get wopped over and over."

"Because Jon is like a freak. He always gets the same as Dictionary Corner and they've got a f***ing computer! He plays with his mum; he's got a Countdown clock in his loft. He does! Seriously!"

However, the studious Richardson might find it difficult to concentrate tonight as the quiz returns for its 11th run.

On his team is Wilkinson who, in the past, has appeared as Riley's assistant, often dressed in costume while using props, offering special prizes, replacing letter tiles with symbols and turning up despite having been 'fired'.

The other regular captain, Lock, is absent due to other commitments but he has an able deputy in Kevin Bridges.

The Glaswegian comic has been one of the country's most popular performers for the last decade now and tickets for his hotly anticipated tour Brand New are selling out fast.

Bridges will be joined on the panel by Jessica Knappett, best known for playing Meg in the TV series Drifters, which she also created, and Lisa in The Inbetweeners Movie.

Finally, performance poet Dr John Cooper Clarke, aka the Bard of Salford, joins the sensible Ms Dent in Dictionary Corner.



8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown, Friday, Channel 4, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY**Silent Witness****BBC1, 9pm**

Part one of two. A woman is murdered and the forensic evidence takes the team to a cosmetic clinic where the victim had been receiving various treatments seemingly for free, but Nikki and Silva are frustrated by the CEO of Hamilton Ashe hospital when he blocks access to Karen's medical records. Meanwhile, when his daughter Rosie turns up at the Lyell as her mum is in hospital over a pregnancy complication, Thomas must play the doting father for a few weeks - a role that does not come naturally.

TUESDAY**Britain's Favourite Dogs: Top 100****ITV, 7.30pm**

Britain is a nation of dog lovers, with one in four of us sharing our homes with a canine. But which of the 217 recognised breeds (and the thousands of cross-breeds) can claim to be the nation's favourite? Sara Cox and Ben Fogler are about to find out as they reveal the results of one of the most comprehensive surveys on dog ownership ever undertaken in the UK. As well as running down the chart of the best-loved breeds, they'll also be hearing from famous owners, including Geri

Halliwell, Simon Gregson, Phillip Schofield, Holly Willoughby and Prince Harry, exploring the key characteristics of the popular pooches that made the top 100, and sharing inspiring stories about some heroic hounds.

WEDNESDAY**Millionaires' Ex-Wives Club****BBC2, 9pm**

Few divorces are painless, but as this documentary discovers, it seems the more money is at stake, the fiercer the fight - and thanks to a change in the law which means a 50/50 split is now the starting point, London has become the leading battleground in high-profile cases. Press coverage of such cases sometimes suggests that the ex-wives are just out for what they can get, but this programme meets two women who went to war with their former spouses to find out what really motivated them. It also examines the toll the legal proceedings can take on the women, as Michelle Young explains why she clocked up 65 court hearings, 13 sets of

lawyers and some huge debts in her fight to prove that her former husband wasn't the penniless bankrupt her claimed, while Lisa Tchenguiz explains why her own family's wealth funded her costly divorce battle.

Kiri**Channel 4, 9pm**

Social worker Miriam is put under increasing pressure to admit she is to blame for what happened to Kiri, while the young girl's foster family of Jim, Alice and Si also find themselves thrown into the media spotlight. Elsewhere, Kiri's grandfather Tobi searches for his son, Nate, the prime suspect in the case, which sees him face up to some uncomfortable truths about his relationship with him. The four-part drama continues, starring Sarah Lancashire, Lucian Msamati and Felicia Mukasa.



Silent Witness, Monday, BBC1, 9pm

THURSDAY**Death in Paradise****BBC1, 9pm**

Famous thriller author Frank O'Toole is found stabbed through the heart after taking an early morning swim in the ocean. Suspicion soon falls on the victim's wife Valerie, but with eyewitnesses confirming he was swimming alone, how could anyone, let alone the prime suspect, have got from the house to the sea without being detected? Away from the investigation, Dwayne concentrates on finding a date for a voodoo love festival. Whodunit, guest starring Simon Callow, Imogen Stubbs, and Sam Gibson of Car Share fame.

FRIDAY**Monty Don's Paradise Gardens****BBC2, 9pm**

The presenter visits gardens that represent and symbolise the four areas of Islamic civilisation - Andalucian, Moghul, Persian and Ottoman - revealing the importance of Paradise Gardens celebrated in the Koran. He begins his quest in Spain, where he discovers their basic building blocks. In Morocco, he sees the wide variety of paradise gardens from an enormous royal walled meadow, to a secret inner city courtyard. Then in the Iranian desert, he uncovers the mystery to their creation.

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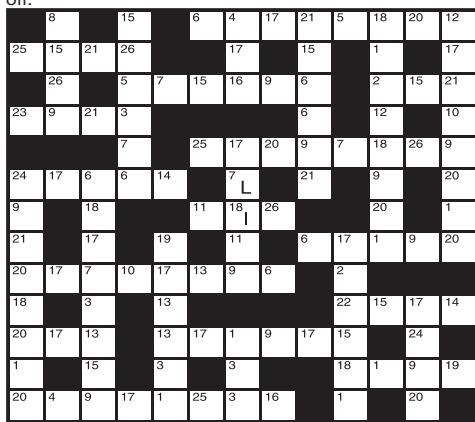
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Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	R	O	E	J	P	C	B	U	Q	H	I	W
14	F	M	X	V	T	S	K	D	G	A	N	Y

Quiz

- Which annual publication was first published in 1700 as Voices of the Stars?
- What did Ben Jonson and Roger Stoughton invent?
- Which 'absurdist' playwright died in March 1994?
- Which US city was designed by French engineer Pierre L'Enfant?
- What is the BBC's 24-hour news-and-sport radio network called?
- Who wrote the classic US satirical novel Main Street?
- Who presented Hampton Court Palace to Henry VIII in 1525?
- What is the capital of Zimbabwe?
- Which king of France did Marie Antoinette marry?
- What is a devil's coach-horse?

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

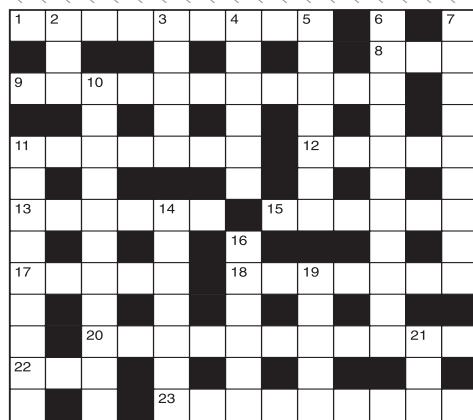
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- In the main, it can't be left (9)
- Stir caused by short notice and nothing more (3)
- Electric chair occupied by rulers? (4,2,5)
- Support for one who gives a lesson (7)
- One asked to stay made a random surmise, we hear (5)
- Part of the world where there's a daily rising! (6)
- Those who occupy it may be given plenty of time (6)
- The principle is the same both ways (5)
- Present indisputable evidence again and reprimand (7)
- The North Sea (6,5)
- Shelter put back for the sea-dweller (3)
- Editress upset about northern heretic (9)
- Fasten an unfinished row of seats (3)
- Insolvent stock exchange operator loses a letter (5)
- Describing the mountains when one is in diverted plane (6)
- Briefly the same bet for the old lady (7)
- Hairdresser's staff (7,4)
- A girl will show you the Swiss lake (9)
- Lots of interest may attract people to this (7,4)
- Minor tale ruined by the circus performer (4-5)
- Spotted description of plain cake (7)
- Marie's unusual hosts (6)
- Carefully examine soft dress (5)
- Yes, it's one of the pupils, we hear (3)

Down

- Fasten an unfinished row of seats (3)
- Electric chair occupied by rulers? (4,2,5)
- Support for one who gives a lesson (7)
- One asked to stay made a random surmise, we hear (5)
- Part of the world where there's a daily rising! (6)
- Those who occupy it may be given plenty of time (6)
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- Spotted description of plain cake (7)
- Marie's unusual hosts (6)
- Carefully examine soft dress (5)
- Yes, it's one of the pupils, we hear (3)



Quick Clues:

Across

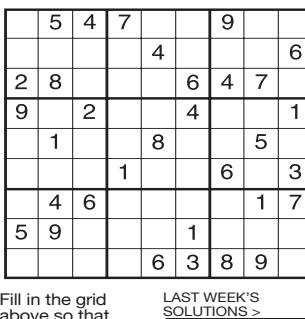
- Benefit (9)
- Obscure (3)
- Bravery (5)
- Among (6)
- Tackle (7)
- Weird (5)
- Drift (6)
- Innocent (9)
- Incessantly (11)
- Great slaughter (9)
- Let (7)
- Protect (6)
- Flavour (5)
- Small French coin (3)

Down

Down

- Nothing (3)
- Rude (11)
- Iron (22)
- Agree; 23 Incense; 24 Annual; 25 Tuners. Down: 1 Cat's eye; 2 Refusal; 3 Edits; 4 Ensigns; 5 Spill; 6 State; 9 Deck chair; 14 Liberal; 15 Printer; 16 Intense; 19 Pagan; 20 Trunk; 21 Scrub.
- Question (11)
- Innocent (9)
- Pointless (5)
- Type of sword (7)
- Anarchy (11)
- Name for the sun (3)
- Unsafe (9)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

1	3	5	7	4	9	6	8	2
6	4	9	3	2	8	1	7	5
8	2	7	6	5	1	4	9	3
2	7	6	1	3	4	8	5	9
9	5	8	2	6	7	3	1	4
3	1	4	9	8	5	7	2	6
7	8	2	4	9	3	5	6	1
5	6	3	8	1	2	9	4	7
4	9	5	7	6	2	3	8	

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 7 Amends; 8 Inkpot; 10 Scuttle; 11 Islet; 12 Year; 13 Skins; 17 Sight; 18 Iron; 22 Agree; 23 Incense; 24 Annual; 25 Tuners. Down: 1 Cat's eye; 2 Refusal; 3 Edits; 4 Ensigns; 5 Spill; 6 State; 9 Deck chair; 14 Liberal; 15 Printer; 16 Intense; 19 Pagan; 20 Trunk; 21 Scrub.
QUICK - Across: 7 Repair; 8 Haste; 10 Protect; 11 Tract; 12 Ewer; 13 Below; 17 Hague; 18 Free; 22 Lower; 23 Upright; 24 Silent; 25 Manner. Down: 1 Prophet; 2 Opposed; 3 Liken; 4 Caution; 5 Steel; 6 Utility; 9 Strenuous; 14 Vagrant; 15 Brigand; 16 Fetter; 19 Close; 20 Dwell; 21 Break.

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

785349
485691
696237

gives a fruit,
gives more fruit,
gives a South American fruit.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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This break Leeds to perfect mix

FOOD and footie – that's certainly the way to the heart of the two boys in my life and we were combining the two with a weekend in Leeds.

Home for the weekend was the four-star Novotel which was just a five-minute walk from the train station.

The hotel bar – The Sugar Factory – is sparkly and metallic with a chilled out atmosphere. We supped on sumptuous cocktails while we watched sport on the huge TV screens, sitting on comfy leather sofas.

Novotel catered for both the youngsters and the adults with a gym, web corner and games area for the young ones.

The hotel was in an ideal location close to the city centre. It was easy to get around on foot because the centre seems to be based on a grid system and when we ventured out with our Family Day Rover passes it also seemed so simple on public transport.

MATCH

Our reason for being in Leeds was for a football match at Elland Road – both my husband and son were over the moon that we managed to have a great view in the press box.

The match had switched to a Friday night, so that gave us plenty of time to explore this eclectic city.

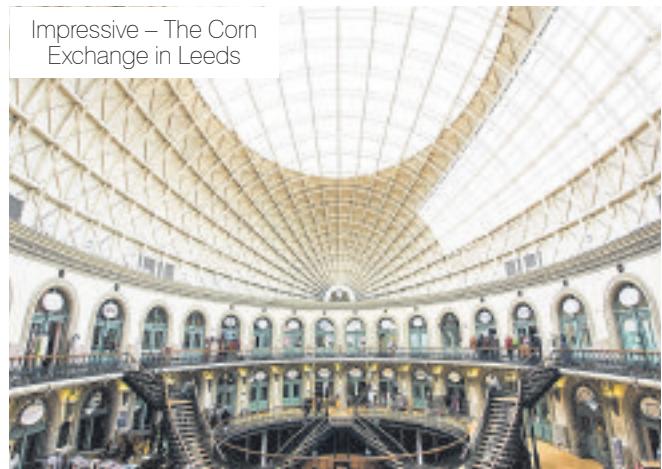
Just 10 minutes bus ride from the hotel was the Emmerdale Studio Experience. For fans of the soap this is a dream. On the 80-minute guided tour at the former ITV studios, you can find out how story lines are put together, visit the make-up department, sit at the Woolpack bar and wander through the model village.

We had now worked up an appetite and made our way back into the centre for lunch at Pizza Fella, in Vicar Lane. Peering through the window the restaurant looked totally unassuming from the outside with its

Chance to pull a few pints at The Woolpack



Impressive – The Corn Exchange in Leeds



contemporary bare wooden interior, but the pizzas were to die for.

In the evening, it was the off to Meat Liquor in Trinity Leeds. Trinity has about 120 shops with plenty of bars and restaurants.

Meat Liquor was very retro and funky with 70s-style tables and it was back to basics with kitchen roll on the table and sauces.

There is so much more to Leeds than bars and restaurants. It is home to the Royal Armouries, which is outstanding and jaw-dropping for both adults and

youngsters alike. The museum is home to the UK's largest collection of arms, armour and artillery. There are six themed galleries – and it is free.

If you still have time there is also shopping with a mixture of independent, boutique and mainstream shops.

Leeds is bidding to become European Capital of Culture 2023 and you can certainly see why they describe it as a 'diverse and vibrant culture'.

It was voted one of the top 10 European cities in 2017 by Lonely Planet. It boasts more than 300 bars

and restaurants and a walk through the streets in the evening just goes to show it is thriving.

Sport is also big in the city and Leeds has hosted huge events including Tour de France Grand Depart in 2014 and the Rugby World Cup in 2015 was hosted at Elland Road.

Leeds is a mixture of old and new with a wonderful collection of buildings, bars and restaurants and attractions. And let's just say that we had far more success with the food than the footie.

LISA BAILEY



Your Chronicle
in association with



Kinky Boots

Faced with bankruptcy due to competition from foreign sources, one small village's shoe factory owner embarks on a daringly different business strategy, ladies' shoes in men's sizes for the drag queen and cross-dresser market.

This true story, which in 2005 was released as a successful film, is the tale of W.J. Brooks Ltd of Earls Barton, Northampton, and its startling move into fetish footwear under the "Divine" brand. With an original score by Cyndi Lauper, this story then became a multiple Tony-award winning Broadway show, later crossing the Atlantic to London's Adelphi Theatre.

London Theatre Break

2 Days by Coach - Evening Show

Departing Saturday 17 Mar

from Dudley, Halesowen & Stourbridge

Price Includes...

Return coach travel

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- ✓ Free time in London



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£129

"An absolute hoot of a show!"
The Times

Motown the Musical

If ever a musical genre lent itself to theatre, it was the mass harmonics and wall-of-sound dramatics of Motown. Motown the Musical is the story of Berry Gordy, a former Detroit car-worker living in an America riven by race riots, who scraped together a shoestring budget in 1959 to found a record label which became its own assembly-line of sensational hits.

Featuring 40 classic songs including My Girl, Stop! In The Name of Love, Dancing in the Street, I Heard It Through The Grapevine and Ain't No Mountain High Enough, this production won't disappoint.

London Theatre Break

2 Days by Coach - Evening Show

Departing Saturday 17 Mar

from Dudley, Halesowen & Stourbridge

Price Includes...

Return coach travel

- ✓ 1 night B&B at a selected hotel, Heathrow area
- ✓ Motown the Musical theatre ticket - Grand Circle (evening performance)
- ✓ Free time in London

**2 Days
by Coach**

only
£139

"A lavish, slick, song-crammed show"
Dominic Cavendish, The Telegraph

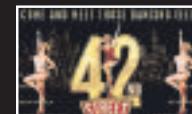


"A lavish, slick, song-crammed show"

Dominic Cavendish, The Telegraph

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PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY
GUIDE TO HOME
BUYING AND
LETTING

Attractive modern family home with four bedrooms

An attractive four-bedroomed detached family home in a modern design, 7 Montpellier Gardens, Dudley, features a double garage and driveway and a good-sized modern kitchen.

It is for sale through Trinity Property estate agents at £255,000 with no chain.

In brief its accommodation comprises an entrance hallway with stairs off, a downstairs WC, a kitchen, dining room and lounge, master bedroom en-suite, three further bedrooms and a bathroom with an airing cupboard.

The property lies in a cul-de-sac location and the rear garden has a lawn, patio and a pond.

In more detail a Tarmac driveway leads to the double garage, which is flanked by a front lawn.

The lounge has a feature fireplace and a bow window. The dining room – currently being used as a sitting room – has sliding patio doors to the rear garden.

The good-sized kitchen has wood-effect laminate flooring and cream-coloured units, complemented by marble-effect working surfaces and splash-back tiling.

The family bathroom has a grey-coloured suite, while the en-suite features pale pink sanitary ware and the downstairs WC is in white. All the bedrooms are of a good size and the rear garden features a substantial patio/terrace, which is flanked by lawn.

The selling agents are expecting a great deal of interest to be shown in the sale of this property and are encouraging interested parties to book a viewing fast!

A spokesman said: "Trinity Property bring a fresh, friendly and honest approach to selling, buying and letting property within the Dudley and Stourbridge area. Offering free market appraisals, great EPC prices, all aspects of property letting and management; we are based in central Dudley and cover Kingswinford, Wordsley, Netherton, Sedgley, Tipton and Tividale and more, with a business built on recommendation. With many years of experience to bring to the table, you can expect great service at the right price."

TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Trinity Property

TEL: 01384 213395

EMAIL: dudley@trinityproperty.net

DUDLEY £255,000



KEY FEATURES

Detached family home

4 good-sized bedrooms

Good-sized modern kitchen

En-suite to bedroom one

Double garage & driveway



Bobby Singh, Esq.
MBA FCCA

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TREMENDOUS 2017 FOR SEDGLEY OFFICE!

Looking back over the months from January through to end of December Sedgley office agreed sales on 23% more properties by contrast to 2016.

National data suggests the West Midlands as a region is experiencing the highest percentage increase in prices throughout the UK! Here at Sedgley we have every confidence the local market will continue to improve well into Spring 2018.

If your New Year Resolution is to consider moving please give us a call - 01902 880888 - to arrange an appointment to assess your home.



DUDLEY, Shipton Close, Milking Bank

Wonderfully presented detached property situated on the popular Milking Bank estate. Occupying a wider than average corner position and having gas central heating & double glazing this family home also boasts; hall, guest W/C, living room, dining room, conservatory, dining-kitchen, FOUR BEDROOMS with ensuite to master, bathroom. Garage, ample parking. NO UPWARD CHAIN. SEDGLEY EPC TBA

Offers in the region of £299,950



HIMLEY, Churns Hill Lane

An IMPRESSIVE and BEAUTIFULLY IMPROVED DETACHED BUNGALOW for those of 55 years and above, which is superbly placed within Himley Village. Including hall, generous lounge, conservatory, refitted kitchen with appliances, two bedrooms and shower room. BLOCK PAVED DRIVEWAY and ADDITIONAL REAR CAR PARKING SPACE EPC C

No upward chain

£239,950



LOWER GORNAL, Keats Drive, Straits

NO UPWARD CHAIN. COMPREHENSIVELY MODERNISED, gas centrally heated, double glazed bungalow with panoramic distant views comprising; hall, lounge, enlarged bathroom, utility room, stunning 22'4" through 'hub of the house' dining kitchen with comprehensive range of 'arts & crafts' oak style units (double French doors out to garden), two double bedrooms.garden. EPC: TBA SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £235,000



LOWER GORNAL, The Alley

Situated on corner position in the popular area of Lower Gornal this DETACHED property is within walking distance of Gornal Village. As well as having gas central heating & double glazing this family home also boasts; hall, living room, dining room, fitted-kitchen, THREE BEDROOMS, stunning shower room, detached garage, greenhouse, gardens and parking for multiple vehicles. VIEWING ESSENTIAL. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £234,950



KINGSWINFORD, Astor Road

An EXPENSIVELY IMPROVED DETACHED BUNGALOW which enjoys a pleasant cul-de-sac position, providing a ready to move into layout which includes TWO BEDROOMS and a FULL WIDTH CONSERVATORY. With FULL WIDTH DRIVEWAY, CARPORT, GARAGE and a very pleasant enclosed garden. EPC D

£224,950



LOWER GORNAL, Ruskin Avenue, Straits

Offering potential with well proportioned living space, this DETACHED BUNGALOW is located on the popular STRAITS estate. With central heating & part double glazing, this TWO BEDROOM property also benefits from; porch, open-plan reception hall-diner, living room, kitchen-diner, shower room, side hall/ utility, conservatory, tandem garage, garden, driveway. NO UPWARD CHAIN. EPC: E SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £224,950

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Kingswinford, Lowe Drive

An IMPRESSIVE LINK DETACHED FAMILY HOME, with BLOCK PAVED DRIVEWAY, GARAGE and a PRIVATE REAR GARDEN, offering a GENEROUS and VERY WELL PRESENTED layout which includes FOUR GOOD SIZED BEDROOMS. EPC D



UPPER GORNAL, Eve Lane

SPACIOUS, gas centrally heated (underfloor & radiator), double glazed DETACHED house comprising THREE BEDROOMS (one with shower room en suite), bathroom, and to the Lower Ground Floor a cloakroom together with magnificent 25'9" through kitchen/ living/ dining room THREE CAR PARKING TO REAR. SAP TBC SEDGLEY



UPPER GORNAL/SEDGLEY BORDER, Plot 3, Adj. to 23 Vale Street

Construction is now nearing completion of a gas centrally heated, double glazed DETACHED BUNGALOW short walk from major bus routes comprising: hall, store, lounge/ dining room, kitchen (with various integrated appliances) two bedrooms, bathroom, garage, parking for 2 vehicles, garden. Plans available (by appointment) - at Sedgley Office SAP: TBA

No upward chain

£215,500

New price

WAS £220,000, NOW £215,000

Offers in the region of £210,000



WOMBOURNE, Planks Lane

An IMPRESSIVE SEMI DETACHED FAMILY HOME, set back beyond the GENEROUS FRONT DRIVEWAY with GARAGE and a GOOD SIZED LEVEL & SUNNY REAR GARDEN, superbly located within Wombourne village, offering a VERY WELL PRESENTED layout including THREE LARGE BEDROOMS. EPC D

£209,950



LOWER GORNAL, Winrush Close

NO UPWARD CHAIN. Stylishly presented modern link-detached property in the highly desirable area of Lower Gornal. Within walking distance of Gornal village, local schools, bus stops and other amenities. Good sized rear garden also benefits from gas central heating, double glazing, entrance porch, guest W/C, living room, kitchen-diner, THREE BEDROOMS with en-suite to master, family bathroom, garage, enclosed rear garden, driveway and garden to front. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £195,500



KINGSWINFORD, Standhills Road

Enjoying a private and sunny rear garden, this SUBSTANTIAL SEMI-DETACHED HOUSE offers a VERY WELL PROPORTIONED and GENEROUS layout which includes THREE LARGE DOUBLE BEDROOMS. With DRIVEWAY, INTEGRAL GARAGE and the property is very well placed for local schools, shops and other amenities. EPC D

Offers in the Region Of £184,950



KINGSWINFORD, Rosedale Walk

A SUBSTANTIALLY EXTENDED MODERN THREE BEDROOM SEMI-DETACHED FAMILY HOME located within Blanford Mere, enjoying an open front outlook with a GARAGE and an enclosed garden to the rear. The accommodation has been EXTENDED to the ground and first floors and includes THREE GOOD BEDROOMS. EPC D

£179,950



WORDSLY, Ryder Street

A BEAUTIFULLY REFURBISHED FAMILY END TOWNHOUSE with a LARGE PRIVATE REAR GARDEN and BLOCK PAVED FRONTPAGE having been EXTENSIVELY REFURBISHED throughout, creating a ready to move into layout of GENEROUS accommodation which includes THREE GOOD SIZED BEDROOMS. EPC C

£164,950



SEDGLEY, Catholic Lane, 'The Limes'

ENVIRABLE LOCATION at Sedgley's premier address! APPRECIABLY SPACIOUS luxury first floor gas centrally & double glazed apartment in exemplary order within walking distance of day-to-day amenities/doctors surgery. Still covered by NHBC guarantee the accommodation includes: Large lounge, kitchen with 'Old English Cream' units, inner hallway, two double bedrooms, principal bedroom with shower room en suite, bathroom. Secure parking. EPC: B SEDGLEY.

PRICE: £164,950



WOODSETTON, Hilary Crescent

CLEAR MINING SEARCH ! - STUNNING QUALITY! Comprehensively modernised & appreciably spacious, gas centrally heated, double glazed semi detached home in exemplary order throughout comprising: hall, store, separate dining room, lounge, refitted kitchen leading into a transverse lounge/orangery addition, Three bedrooms, shower room. Lengthy garden. VIEWING HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. EPC D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £150,000



COSELEY, Upper Ettingshall Road

FANTASTIC - Exceptionally stylish, gas centrally heated, double glazed detached bungalow that has been transformed in recent years by present vendors to a stunning specification comprising: hall, refitted kitchen leading into a transverse lounge/orangery addition, Three bedrooms, shower room. Lengthy garden. VIEWING HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. EPC D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £149,950



SEDGLEY, Kings Road

NO UPWARD CHAIN - Delightful, stylish, significantly modernised and improved, gas centrally heated (combi boiler) UPVC double glazed intermediate terrace excellently situated within walking distance of Sedgley's Bullring, open fields, schools etc. Providing lounge, store, dining room, enlarged/refitted 18'5" breakfast kitchen, two bedrooms, shower room with white suite, good sized garden. EPC: SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £115,000



LOWER GORNAL, Redstone Way

REMARKABLY SPACIOUS! Gas centrally heated, double glazed First Floor "coach house" style apartment with PANORAMIC DISTANT VIEWS from the rear with secure gated entry approach comprising: hall (with internal door to integral garage), staircase up to 19 ft transverse landing, 17'1" through room/dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, TWO BEDROOMS (one with wardrobes), bathroom. Allocated parking, communal grounds. EPC: TBA SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £110,000



COSELEY , Ivyhouse Lane

A traditional semi detached property located in the popular Colesley area of Wolverhampton. This THREE BEDROOM starter home benefits from double glazing, entrance hall, living room, dining room, kitchen, ground-floor bathroom, workshop and enclosed rear garden. VIEWING ESSENTIAL. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £99,950



BILSTON, Alice Street

A well-proportioned modern ground floor apartment located within walking distance of Bilston centre. As well as having double glazing and secure gated parking this ideal first time buyer property / bungalow alternative also boasts; large hallway, living room, kitchen, TWO BEDROOMS with a fine range of units, two bedrooms, upgraded shower room with white suite, ALLOCATED GARDEN. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in excess of £90,000



LOWER GORNAL, Kennedy Crescent

Spacious, modernised UPVC double glazed TWO BEDROOM first floor flat in quiet backwater location representing ideal possibility for first time buyers or buy-to-let investors comprising 17'5" reception hall, 16'5" lounge, refitted kitchen with open-plan lounge-kitchen, fitted shower room, double glazing and electric heating, parking space and is offered with NO UPWARD CHAIN. EPC: TBA SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £75,000



TIPTON, Thunderbolt Way

An extremely well presented ground floor apartment located on a popular modern development in Tipton. With entrance hallway and TWO BEDROOMS this property also benefits from open-plan lounge-kitchen, fitted shower room, double glazing and electric heating, parking space and is offered with NO UPWARD CHAIN. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in excess of £75,000



BILSTON, Ambleside Close, Bradley

A well-presented 'cottage style' end of terrace property ideal for first time buyers or people looking to downsize. Situated in a cul-de-sac location and overlooking the canal to the fore this house also benefits from kitchen-diner, living room, master bedroom, bathroom, parking and offered with NO UPWARD CHAIN. Viewing Essential. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £74,950



This lovely modern house is well presented

DUDLEY
£149,950

<<<

Being immaculately presented throughout, this delightful modern three-bedroomed semi-detached house in St Edmund Close, Dudley, is for sale at offers over £149,950 through loveyourpostcode.com

Featuring a contemporary theme throughout, it occupies a corner plot on a modern development. It is expected to appeal to a wide range of buyers.

The front door leads into the entrance hallway and onwards to the contemporary kitchen/diner.

This has ample space for entertaining and access to the rear garden. The hallway also leads to the lounge which has a clean, modern décor and patio doors leading into the garden. A downstairs W/C completes this floor.

Call loveyourpostcode.com on 0800 862 0870.



Three-bed traditional detached house

GORNAL WOOD
£174,950

An individually designed three-bedroomed traditional detached house, 81 New Street, Gornal Wood, Dudley, is well proportioned and has scope for further enhancement and upgrading.

It is for sale through Wakeman Estate Agents at a reduced price of £174,950 with no chain.

It has a storm porch, entrance hall, cloakroom/WC, two living rooms, a breakfast kitchen, sitting room, three bedrooms, a bathroom, gardens and a concrete store room. This property is positioned on a wide corner plot close to Gornal Wood Village centre, where a wide range of amenities are available. The property has been extended and enlarged.

Call 01384 459999.

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£179,950

A traditional mid terraced house, 192 Newhampton Road West, Newbridge, Wolverhampton, is positioned within easy access of Wolverhampton city centre and the commuter network.

It is for sale through DB Roberts & Partners at £179,950 with no chain.

The property is a well-presented, well-proportioned family home.

In brief its accommodation includes an entrance hall, lounge, dining room, kitchen, playroom, two bedrooms on the first floor, separate bathroom and a WC. The second floor has a loft bedroom with an en-suite. Outside there is a small courtyard and a front and pleasant rear garden.

Contact DB Roberts & Partners on 01902 427257.



A charming apartment in a complex for the over 55s

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£72,000 <<<

This leasehold first floor apartment in Pennhouse Avenue, Wolverhampton, lies within an over 55s complex, having communal facilities, including a ground floor communal living room, kitchen and laundry room.

Other benefits include a lift, a shared private driveway and landscaped gardens.

It is for sale through Dallow & Dallow Estate Agents at £72,000.

The property is wheelchair accessible. The apartment's accommodation briefly comprises of an entrance hallway, one bedroom, a bathroom, a kitchen and a living room.

The apartment is fully double glazed throughout.

Contact Dallow & Dallow Estate Agents on 01902 420208.

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MOTORING

YOUR WEEKLY
GUIDE TO THE
BEST CARS ON
THE MARKET

Stunning looks with intoxicating V12 soundtrack

It's a sad thought, really, that the Vanquish S could just be the last car Aston Martin produces that features a naturally-aspirated V12 engine under the bonnet.

Ever tightening emissions regulations are consigning cars such as this to the history books at an alarming rate, replacing them with smaller, less-polluting turbocharged power plants instead.

While these blown engines may benefit from more power and a smaller appetite for fuel, they can't quite match their naturally-aspirated ancestors when it comes to drama. And in this, the convertible Vanquish S Volante, you're about as close to that drama as you can get.

The Vanquish S Volante is actually a bit of a dinosaur these days. Although it was only brought to market last year, it still shares a lot of its makeup with the original second-generation Vanquish Volante that was launched back in 2013.

Poise

Key changes for the Vanquish S are more power from its mighty 6.0-litre V12 – up 27bhp to 592bhp, to be precise – as well as a new carbon-fibre front splitter and diffuser. There's a restyled quad-exhaust system, too.

Beneath the skin, Aston's engineers have fettled the suspension, to improve the super-GT's poise through the corners.

This is the Aston's party piece, and arguably the primary reason why you'd want to go out and spend £211,950 to get your hands on a Vanquish S Volante.

The 6.0-litre naturally aspirated V12 develops a considerable 592bhp, with peak torque standing at 630Nm. The benchmark dash from 0-60mph is dispatched in 3.5 seconds, and the Aston will carry on to a 197mph top speed.

Now, fuel economy from a car with a whopping great V12 under the bonnet is never going to be amazing, but compared with rivals such as the Bentley Continental GT convertible and Ferrari California T, the Aston's claimed 21.6mpg is roughly par for the course.

There's no question that there's a certain sense of occasion that comes from getting behind the wheel of the Vanquish S Volante. Slide down into the cosseting leather seat, pop the overly-designed glass key into the ignition, and the V12 engine barks into life.

While the folding fabric roof does allow you to take in more of that engine's intoxicating soundtrack, the absence of a proper metal roof does mean that the Vanquish S Volante will never be quite as competitive as its coupe stable mate down a winding country road.

However, that's not the end of the world. Even though the Volante may be more than 100kg heavier than its rangemate, it's still offers



The Aston Martin Vanquish S Volante is one of the best-looking convertibles on the market

keener drivers an exhilarating drive thanks to its wonderfully balanced chassis, compliant dampers and well-weighted steering.

You'd be hard-pressed to find a more attractive convertible than the Vanquish S Volante – no small feat considering the current crop of drop-top supercars.

The long, elegant bonnet flows down to an aggressive front end, which is accentuated by a racy new carbon-fibre splitter. At the back, a similarly sporty looking carbon-fibre diffuser has been added, while a new quad exhaust design hints at the Vanquish S's increased performance.

It's a stunning-looking thing, and certainly one that attracts attention out on the road.

The cabin is the drop-top Aston's biggest let down. Yes, there's plenty of leather and everything has been stitched together by hand,

but you can't help but think it looks rather dated – and even a bit haphazard in places.

This theme is continued by the centre console, which adopts a rather button-heavy approach to its design, as opposed to the more minimal layouts that are increasingly favoured by both premium and budget manufacturers. Then there's the infotainment system, which looks practically prehistoric next to those found in the likes of the Mercedes-AMG GT C Cabriolet and Audi R8 Spyder.

Considering you're paying north of £200,000 for the privilege of owning an Aston Martin Vanquish S Volante, you'd hope standard equipment would be generous. For that rather considerable sum of money, Aston Martin

will throw in leather upholstery, 20-inch alloy wheels, plenty of carbon fibre and a premium Bang & Olufsen 13-speaker sound system. So

at least you're not feeling short-changed in the equipment department.

With that big 6.0-litre V12 under the bonnet, though, running costs are going to be pretty steep. Aston Martin quotes a combined fuel consumption figure of 21.6mpg, while CO₂ emissions stand at a steep 298g/km.

Aston Martin's Vanquish S Volante isn't without its flaws. Sure, the power and soundtrack from the engine is addictive and it's great fun on a windy road, but it's let down by a cabin that doesn't feel anywhere near as high-quality as its £211,950 price tag would suggest.

Still, it has those drop-dead gorgeous looks, is comfortable at low speed, highly entertaining on a challenging road and is likely to be one of the last Aston Martins to be powered by a naturally-aspirated V12 engine. That's almost a good enough reason to buy one on its own.



Sporty GT-Line trims for Sorento SUV

The South Korean car manufacturer's seven-seat SUV has been given an upgrade for 2018, and is available with free service package.

The new GT-Line and GT-Line S trims start from £36,495 and £41,995 respectively, and have been given a sporty makeover with 19-inch alloy wheels, stainless steel side steps and twin exhaust pipes. S models get headlights that turn with the car, while GT-Line models get standard halogen units.

Inside, there are black leather seats, a leather-trimmed steering wheel and a leather gear knob.

The new automatic gearbox is an eight-speed

system, which replaces the existing six-speed unit and is available on four of the seven Sorento trims, coming as standard on GT-Line models.

Kia says that the increased number of ratios contributes to improved economy – the 2.2-litre diesel engine now achieves 43.5mpg and emits 170g/km of CO₂, compared with 42.2mpg and 174g/km for the previous automatic model.

The upgraded specification coincides with Kia's SUV Event, which is running throughout January. Buyers of any of the South Korean car maker's SUVs will receive the firm's Care-3 servicing package free of charge.

The offer covers the cost of parts, lubricants and labour involved in a vehicle's first three manufacturer-scheduled services, equal to three years or 30,000 miles, whichever comes first.

The package normally costs from £199, depending on the model.

This is the second year running that the manufacturer has offered the deal, which is available on the Niro, Stonic, Sorento, Sportage and Soul. Customers opting for the plug-in hybrid version of the Niro or all-electric Soul will also receive a free home charging unit.

A dramatic new look inside and out

By James Parker

Škoda has announced pricing and specifications for the Kodiaq SportLine – the next exciting addition to the brand's multi-award-winning SUV range.

Set to deliver a sporting edge to the line-up, the SportLine model will be offered with six different engine and transmission options to provide customers with the broadest possible choice.

First unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show earlier this year, the SportLine model has been created to appeal to drivers who like the dynamic look of Škoda's performance models, but require the practicality of a full-size SUV with the ability to carry up to seven passengers.

Design

Available to order now, the new SportLine models are priced from £32,685 and are positioned between the SE L and Edition models in the expanded line-up.

In keeping with other SportLine models in the Škoda range, the Kodiaq version features a full design package that includes 20-inch Vega Anthracite alloy wheels, deeper front and rear sport bumpers.

The exterior design package is completed with a number of additional black details, including the radiator grille, roof rails, door mirror housings and side window trims.

Inside, the Kodiaq SportLine gains a leather sports steering wheel, carbon effect dashboard and door inserts, along with Alcantara-trimmed sports bucket seats and door panels.

An LED interior lighting pack, SportLine



The car features 20-inch Vega Anthracite alloy wheels



SportLine has a choice of four engines

plaque and black trim complete the interior design package.

The Kodiaq SportLine is available with four engines; two petrol and two diesel, with power outputs ranging from 150PS to 190PS. All four are equipped with Škoda's acclaimed



The latest addition to Škoda's award-winning SUV range will deliver a sporting edge to the line-up

four-wheel drive transmission as standard, with DSG gearbox fitted as standard on the 2.0 TSI 180PS and 2.0 TDI 190PS. Both the 1.4 TSI 150PS and 2.0 TDI 150PS engines are available with the choice of manual or DSG.

In terms of equipment, the SportLine models

build on the already generously appointed SE L specification, and feature seven seats, Columbus infotainment system with 9.2" touchscreen display and integrated Wi-Fi, electrically operated boot and Drive mode select.

Among the many features exclusive to the SportLine are a colour multifunction trip computer, front parking sensors and an electrically adjustable driver's seat.

The first deliveries of the new Kodiaq SportLine are expected next month.

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Families help Volvo cars to create autonomous drive



The Volvo XC90 the families will be testing during the Drive Me trials

Volvo is now starting to develop its autonomous drive cars with help from Swedish families who will test them on the public roads of Gothenburg.

The first two families, the Hains and the Simonovskis, have received the Volvo XC90 premium SUVs with which they will support the Drive Me project.

Three more families will follow early next year, and over the next four years up to 100 people will be involved in Drive Me.

Both families will contribute invaluable data by allowing engineers at the company to monitor

their everyday use and interaction with the car, as they drive to work, bring the kids to school or go shopping.

Volvo Cars plans to have a fully autonomous car commercially available by 2021, and the data derived from Drive Me will play a crucial role in the development of these.

"It feels great to be a part of this project," said Alex Hain, 45. "We get the chance to be part of developing technology that will one day save lives."

Drive Me will involve real customers testing the different stages of

driver-assisted and eventually fully autonomous technology.

"Drive Me is an important research project for Volvo Cars," said Henrik Green, senior vice president for the company's R&D department. "We expect to learn a lot from engaging these families and will use their experiences to shape the development, so that by 2021 we can offer our customers a fully autonomous car."

Volvo Cars continues to develop autonomous cars with the same care and thoroughness that has helped it establish its position as the builder of some of the world's safest cars.

Volvo's XC40 is a breath of fresh air

By Tom Wiltshire

The XC40 is Volvo's new compact SUV – and note that the company calls it an SUV, and not a crossover. With high ground clearance, four-wheel drive available and "the proportions of an SUV", this is less of a jacked-up hatchback and more of a scaled-down XC60.

The new baby of the Volvo range is also the brand's first entrant into this massively popular market sector, and with its fashion-led design it aims straight at the heart of the territory the Range Rover Evoque has occupied so well.

The XC40 sits upon a brand-new platform that will go on to underpin several future models of the Swedish firm's range. Called CMA (Compact Modular Architecture), it will allow Volvo to offer the XC40 with not just petrol and diesel engines, but hybrid and even pure electric powertrains.

Occupying a market sector the firm hasn't entered before, the XC40 is by definition all-new, though items have been borrowed from across Volvo's range of 60 and 90 series cars.

Volvo's also using the XC40 to launch a new way of owning your car. Named Care by Volvo, it's more akin to a phone contract than a standard PCP or contract hire – owners pay Volvo a monthly fee which covers ownership of the vehicle and almost every other expense – tax, maintenance, and insurance. It also allows users to 'borrow' a larger car for up to 14 days a year. Currently only available within the M25, care by Volvo will roll out across the country if demand is strong enough.

We had the opportunity to sample both T5 petrol and D4 diesel models, both mated to eight-speed automatic gearboxes. The

2.0-litre petrol, though smooth and powerful, is noisy when pressed, and with high fuel consumption it's unlikely to be a big seller.

Instead, Volvo expects the bulk of sales to come from diesel models. Though grumbly at low speeds, the diesel engine soon quiets down at a cruise, and with 187bhp on tap it has more than enough shove for cutthroat city driving or long motorway journeys.

Initially, these will be the only two engines available, though later in 2018 Volvo will launch lower-powered engines – a 148bhp D3 diesel and 154bhp and 187bhp T3 and T3 petrols. All but T3 and D3 engines are offered with standard all-wheel drive and eight-speed autos – lower powered engines get front-wheel drive and six-speed manual gearboxes.

Ride comfort is excellent, even on the optional 19-inch wheels of our test car.

No compact SUV could reasonably be called a design triumph, but the XC40 is arguably one of the best of the bunch. Neat proportions give it a pleasingly rugged stance, and it's chock-full of neat detailing inside and out, like the tiny Swedish flag adorning on the corner of the bonnet.

Volvo's bold corporate grille dominates the front, flanked by eye-catching 'Thor's Hammer' LED daytime running lights. Standard LED headlights ensure even base-spec Momentum cars look premium.

The XC40 is available with a wide array of paint colours including dual-tone combinations. Stylish alloy wheel designs stand out from the crowd too.

Step into an XC40 from a Range Rover Evoque and you'll be floored. The Volvo's interior is a genuinely lovely place to be, with great-quality materials and superbly comfortable seats even on base-spec cars.

The centre console is arranged around



Neat proportions give the XC40 a pleasantly rugged stance and it's chock-full of neat detailing inside and out

Volvo's nine-inch portrait-oriented touchscreen infotainment system. It's slick and works well. The company's main goal for the XC40's interior was to carve out storage spaces wherever possible – and it's achieved it. There's even a superbly engineered 'curry hook', which folds down from the glovebox to keep your Tikka Masala safely hung up rather than slopping around on the floor.

The clever touches continue in the boot, with a multifunctional false floor that can hide the parcel shelf, hang up bags and keep shopping from rolling around all at the same time. The boot itself is decently large at 460 litres, while six-footers will be able to sit comfortably in the rear.

Equipment levels are impressive. All cars come with LED headlights, navigation and a 12.3-inch digital dial display.

Three trim levels will be on offer in the UK – base-spec Momentum, sporty R-Design and flagship Inscription. Each also gains a 'Pro' variant, aimed at fleet buyers who may want choice equipment without delving into the options list.

R-Design adds leather and Nubuck upholstery, a sports chassis and racay alloy wheels, while Inscription switches aluminium dashboard inserts for wood, adds chrome around the window trim and adds a crystal to the gearknob. Safety kit is also generous, with autonomous braking capable of detecting

vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and even large animals. Spec the optional Intellisafe Assist pack and you'll benefit from adaptive cruise control with Volvo's brilliant Pilot Assist semi-autonomous driving system, which takes the sting out of motorway stints.

The XC40 is a breath of fresh air in a market sector that's quickly becoming bloated. It's neat exterior and wonderful interior are sure to earn it admiring glances, and it's every bit as impressive on the road as its main rivals.

Generous standard equipment and a predicted class-leading residual value is great too.

Model: Volvo XC40 D4.
Price as tested: £35,705



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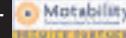
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Vauxhall

Vauxhall's Grandland X is very well put together



Grandland X has a robust stance, with accentuated wheel arches and a wide front grille

By Carmel Stewart

The Grandland X is an important vehicle for Vauxhall, completing as it does the company's crossover trio of SUVs which began with the mid-sized 4WD Mokka X, followed by the compact 2WD Crossland X.

You would be forgiven for thinking that the Daddy of the range was a robust 4x4 but, in fact, it comes in 2WD only with an optional electronic grip control which adapts the torque distribution for optimum traction, depending on which of the driving modes has been selected – normal, snow mud or sand.

Similar in styling to the slightly smaller Mokka X, the Grandland X has a robust stance, with accentuated wheel arches and a wide front grille with a sill plate below plus slim LEDs front and rear. A high waist and chrome highlights add an aerodynamic appeal.

Inside where there is space enough for five occupants, the driving position is elevated, the modern, well laid-out dash uncomplicated and the ambient lighting tastefully sufficient.

At the rear there is 514 litres of easy-load boot space which ups to 1,652 litres with the rear seat backs dropped down.

Engine choices are confined to two turbo units – a 1.2 litre 130ps three-cylinder turbo petrol and a 1.6 litre 120ps four-cylinder turbo diesel. Both can



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Getting connected is easy in Grandland X

be combined with either a six-speed manual or six-speed automatic transmission. Selection will come down to personal preference, with the diesel returning an official average of 70.6mpg mpg and the petrol 54.4mpg on 17-inch wheels. More engine options will be added next year.

On the road there are no real highs or lows. The ride is comfortable, the cabin quiet, the engines more than adequate, although the suspension is not as all absorbing as some of its rivals.

The Grandland X, while not exciting to drive, is well put together with a very decent standard spec. It will deliver its occupants to their required destination in unruffled comfort but it is entering into a very tough SUV market place which has doubled in size during the past six or seven years. Its rivals are long-established, so Vauxhall will need to sharpen its automotive elbows if it is to make an impact with this model.

But the newness of the Grandland X can also be considered a plus as many buyers like to drive the latest model and it is following in the tyre treads of the increasingly popular Mokka X.

Its specification list includes all the driving aids of any self-respecting modern vehicle: automatic cruise control with pedestrian detection and automatic emergency braking, driver drowsiness alert, and advanced park assist plus the option of a heated steering wheel, heated front and rear seats and smart tailgate, that opens with a flick of the foot.

All that, oh so vital, fingertip connectivity is also available through Vauxhall On Star, so you not only have automatic crash response alerting the emergency services should the airbags be deployed but can also book an hotel room, find a parking space and charge your smartphone wirelessly as well as access emails, phone messages, Google maps and the like thanks to the Apple CarPlay and Android Auto integration.

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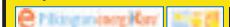
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£12m Hogan vows to repay fans' faith

VILLA striker Scott Hogan has vowed to start justifying his £12million fee – and repay the fans who stuck by him during a difficult first year at the club. The 25-year-old's goal in a 5-0 New Year's Day win over Bristol City was his first in the Championship this season – and only his second since arriving in a big money move from Brentford last January.

Hogan hopes to use it as a platform to better things after admitting a lack of goals had left him low on confidence. In an honest interview, the Republic of Ireland international revealed how he sought the advice of friends and family and faced up to a few 'home truths' in a bid to recapture his form.

Hogan, who earned his move to Villa after blasting 15 goals for Brentford in the first half of last season, thanked supporters for their continued support despite his struggles. "The fans have been really good, considering their club spent a lot of money on a striker who hasn't scored goals," he said. "I would like to just repay them and hopefully, if there are people are on my back, I can now start changing their opinion."

FIFA to probe alleged abuse of Gibbs-White

FIFA has confirmed it is investigating claims made by Liverpool striker Rhian Brewster that England team-mate Morgan Gibbs-White was racially abused during the Under-17 World Cup final.

Brewster, aged 17, made the allegation in an interview with the Guardian last week. He said he had either personally experienced racial abuse or witnessed it on a football pitch seven times, including five occasions in the last seven months.

One of the alleged incidents he referred to was aimed at Wolves midfielder Gibbs-White in October's 5-2 victory over Spain in Kolkata in which both Gibbs-White and Brewster scored. According to Brewster's interview, Gibbs-White was called 'a monkey' by a Spanish player.

A FIFA spokesman said it had recently received a complaint from the Football Association and 'is now analysing and gathering evidence'.

The FA is understood to have flagged up the incident at the time and followed that up with additional evidence in November.

Supporters urged to join in club protest

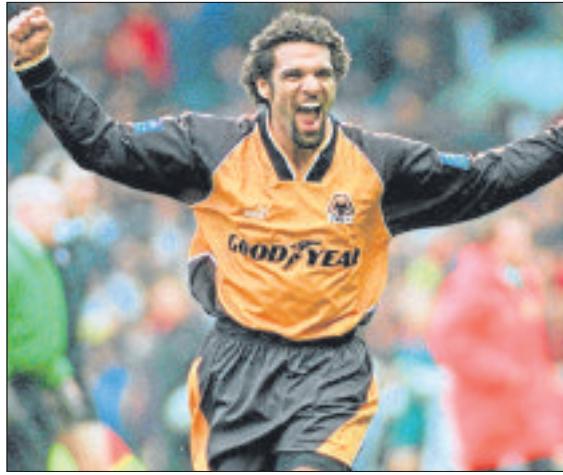
THE Walsall Supporters Trust has urged fans to back a protest at Saturday's game against Oxford amid frustration at how the club is being run.

Fans are asked to stand outside the Banks' Stadium instead of buying tickets, while season ticket holders are encouraged to leave in the 80th minute to join then join up with the other supporters outside.

Olly Beckett, who has followed Walsall for 54 years, is behind the protest. He said: "This protest is not about shouting abuse or hurling insults, it's about saving this football club. The identity of our club is slowing being eroded away."

The Walsall Supporters Trust voted seven to two in favour of backing the planned protest and in a statement said: "Over the last few weeks, it has become obvious that more and more fans have become disillusioned with the way they perceive the club is being run.

"We encourage all fans to join this peaceful protest to show that now is time for the club to affirm the ambition that we all want."



Wolves match winner Don celebrates after his winning goal gave Wolves FA Cup quarter final victory over Leeds at Elland Road in 1998. But then Arsenal spoiled the party



Walsall's goalscorers Darren Byfield and Don celebrate winning the Nationwide League Division Two play off final at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff Sunday May 27, 2001

Yorkshire's Don was Black Country at heart

SPORTING FEATURE

By Joe Masi

FEW players can claim to have won the hearts of both Wolves and Albion fans, but few scored goals like Don Goodman.

It is 24 years since then Wolves boss Graham Taylor splashed out £1.1million to sign the striker from Sunderland, bringing him back to the Black Country three years after leaving The Hawthorns.

He had been a huge hit with the Baggies, scoring 63 goals in 163 appearances, and while his time at Wolves was a little less prolific – 39 goals in 154 games – it built to a crescendo that saw him net an FA Cup quarter-final winner against Leids in his final season.

Born in Leeds on May 9, 1966, only weeks before the whole nation were partying having lifted the World Cup, Goodman was perhaps destined to become a footballer. 'The Don' started his career with Bradford City in 1984, but it was in the Black Country that the striker really made a name for himself, impressing Ron Saunders enough to fork out £50,000 in March 1987.

He made his debut against Oldham later that month and, a few weeks later, netted his first goal in a 1-1 draw with Crystal Palace.

Just seven league goals would follow in 1987/88 as Albion narrowly avoided relegation from the old Division Two, but 1988/89 (15) and 1989/90 (21) would prove to be better campaigns on a personal level.

However, Goodman's love affair with the Baggies became shaky in 1991 as he made a £900,000 move to Sunderland. Goodman has since explained that Albion's decision to sell him was purely for the financial benefit of the club as they made a handsome profit on



The Don had four years at Albion



Last year, Don was one of the football luminaries at a 'Smile for Joel' event. Back from left, Joe Mayo, Ally Robertson, Matt Murray, Don, Ray Graydon, Front, from left, Darren Wrack, Joel's brother Owen Richards, and mother Suzy Richards, with ex-Wolves' Mel Eves and John Richards

what they paid Bradford for him. His three-year stay at Roker Park saw him net 42 goals in 116 appearances, but soon after the Black Cats' relegation to the third tier he was on his way back to the West Midlands, brought in by Taylor on the same day as John de Wolf from Feyenoord. Partnering either Steve Bull or David Kelly up front, he helped guide Wolves to the play-offs twice in three seasons – falling though at the semi-final stage on each occasion.

But perhaps Goodman's finest moment in a Wolves shirt would arrive at Elland Road on March 7, 1998, as he scored the only goal of the game to send Wolves into their first FA Cup semi-final in 17 years. Defeat to Arsenal stopped them going to Wembley and he finished his Wolves career with a flourish, netting three goals in his final four games.

That would not save him from Mark McGhee's clear-out in the summer though and – aside from a brief loan stint at Barnsley – he spent three years out of English football at Sanfrecce Hiroshima in Japan and Motherwell in Scotland.

However, the Black Country came calling again in March 2001 – and this time it was the Saddlers.

Now aged 34, his goal record was drying up – but one of his three goals he scored was a vital equaliser in the play-off final victory over Reading that won the club promotion to the second tier.

He spent another year at Walsall before moving on to Exeter City, but the West Midlands called one last time – joining Stafford Rangers for a season before retiring – and he is now carving out a successful career as television pundit with Sky Sports.

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Boy Don good! Player who crossed Black Country divide



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Glassboys denied by late leveller

Stourbridge 1 Mickleover Sports 1
STOURBRIDGE had victory snatched from their grasp when Mickleover stunned their hosts with a 95th-minute equaliser on Saturday.

Tom Tonks' precision 34th-minute finish looked good enough to give the Glassboys maximum points - but Stourbridge failed to press home the advantage.

Stourbridge took the lead when Luke Benbow produced a sublime backheel to release Tonks, who clipped the ball home from an acute angle beyond goalkeeper Lewis King's reach.

Stourbridge could have increased the lead on 44 minutes when Matt Dodd struck the bar and the ball was twice cleared.

Paul McCone headed just wide from a Tonks throw and then powered a Benbow free-kick the wrong side of the post on 89 minutes and in stoppage time former Burton Albion player Jimmy Phillips levelled.

Halesowen Town 1 Grantham Town 3
SECOND placed Grantham proved too strong for Halesowen.

Grantham went ahead in the 30th minute when Curtis Burrows headed a rebound into an empty net.

The Gingerbreads doubled their lead in the 37th minute with a breakaway goal from Lee Shaw - his 27th of the season. Shaw then fed Andrew Wright to make it 3-0 in the 64th minute.

Home substitute Roland Agbor picked his spot to beat Preston and pull a consolation goal back for Halesowen with a delicate 81st minute chip.

Roynon rides again! Popular racer back in Heathens colours

POPULAR rider Adam Roynon is back with the club. The Cumbrian racer, who broke his leg trying to win the league for Heathens in 2012, is the first name on their National Trophy roster for the new season.

And he admits it's a dream move to be reunited with Heathens fans and bosses alike after his two injury-hit seasons with the Monmore Green side.

He said: "Their fans and their management are people who genuinely care about their riders. But there's also a lot of expectation because of how much they care and as a rider it's my duty to perform to the best of my ability."

"I've gained even more experience since I last rode for the club and hopefully I can come back in and do the job that is expected of me."

Heathens have signed Roynon with the aim of him appearing in all eight National Trophy fixtures and the Golden Hammer individual.

Club boss Gary Patchett said: "Adam was delighted to come back to us, even in a reduced fixture list. He has unfinished business and wants to do well for us."

Under-21s clash hailed a big success



Ollie Mann on the run for Stour

Stourbridge u-21s 51DK u-21s 5

THE idea for an Under-21s fixture over Christmas was originally put forward in the summer with Veseyans agreeing to put a squad together to travel to Stourton Park.

Unfortunately, with less than a fortnight to go, Veseyans had to pull out, but Dudley Kingswinford agreed to step in.

Having lost all three of the Boxing Day fixtures at DK only a few days

before, this was always going to be tough for Stourbridge.

Despite winning 51-5 against their old rivals, the game - made up of four pulsating 30 minute quarters - was far closer and more entertaining than the scoreline suggests.

Between the 22s, this was a hard-fought contest with both teams performing well, working through the phases and retaining possession for long spells. Stour's more dogged,

tireless defence in front of their own try line and more clinical finishing at the other end made the difference.

Watched by 250 strong crowd, the idea has been hailed a great success, allowing young talent from First to Colts XV's the chance to play together and giving the younger players an ideal opportunity to get more experience at a higher level.

It is hoped more Under 21s games can be arranged in the future.

DK CLAIM THE DERBY SPOILS

Wolverhampton 5 DK 54

CASTLECROFT looked good in the winter sunshine to greet this local derby and the pitch promised to provide heavy going for the two teams.

The question was how would the extended Christmas break affect the teams? Both were in need of the points given their respective league positions.

Wolverhampton had kept the ball for numerous phases early on but the weight of tackle finally told and DK swiftly turned defence into attack.

The deadline was broken as scrum half Jordan Brookes outnumbered the defence and full back Nic Adams had a simple task of running the ball in. Sam Vaughan made it 7-0.

Advantage

A second Vaughan conversion, from his own try, doubled the advantage and it was 21-0 at the break when Matt Perks strode in under the posts. Vaughan again added the extras.

The second half opened with a vintage try from Luke Greenwood, but this time the conversion was missed.

DK were starting to dominate and the lead was stretched when Stef Shillingford fed Nic Adams, and the extras were added.

Vaughan was yellow-carded for an incident at a ruck, but DK were still threatening the Wolves try line even when down to 14.

The visitors' next try came after Ryan Smitheman and Jordan Brookes had combined to set Danny Hawkins away and Adams converted.

A Perks try, converted by Adams took DK 47 points clear before the hosts pulled five back with a well-worked try.

DK had the last word with the final try of the afternoon. It came when Brookes' kick through landed in the goal area for full back Adams to touch down. Vaughan's kick sailed through the uprights.



Sam Vaughan breaks clear to score for DK in their 54-5 win over Wolverhampton

Blue hoops among illustrious company

DUDLEY Kingswinford Running Club athletes were back in action with a bang.

Mark Homer competed in the Staffordshire County Championships over a testing course.

Rubbing shoulders with elite runners from the likes of Tipton Harriers, Cannock and Stafford, Wolves & Bilston and City of Stoke Homer finished 72nd

overall in 41.56 and claimed 29th in the masters race. Dave Norman was at Attingham Park, Shrewsbury for the Shropshire County event coming mid division in 38.34 over a flat three-lap course among top runners from Telford AC, Shrewsbury AC, Oswestry Olympians and Newport & District.

Twenty fours hours later Richard Tonks was 199th in 40.33, Andy Weaver 326th in 46.40, Tim Rowe 376th in 48.30, Amanda Dawes 527th in 54.35, Don Taggart 609th in 57.39 and Charlotte Tonks 802nd in 70.56.

blue hoops were in illustrious company at a rearranged 10k in Telford, won by former National Cross Country winner Charlie Husson.

Richard Tonks was 199th in 40.33, Andy Weaver 326th in 46.40, Tim Rowe 376th in 48.30, Amanda Dawes 527th in 54.35, Don Taggart 609th in 57.39 and Charlotte Tonks 802nd in 70.56.

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